envelope

a true love story 2
illustrated short story

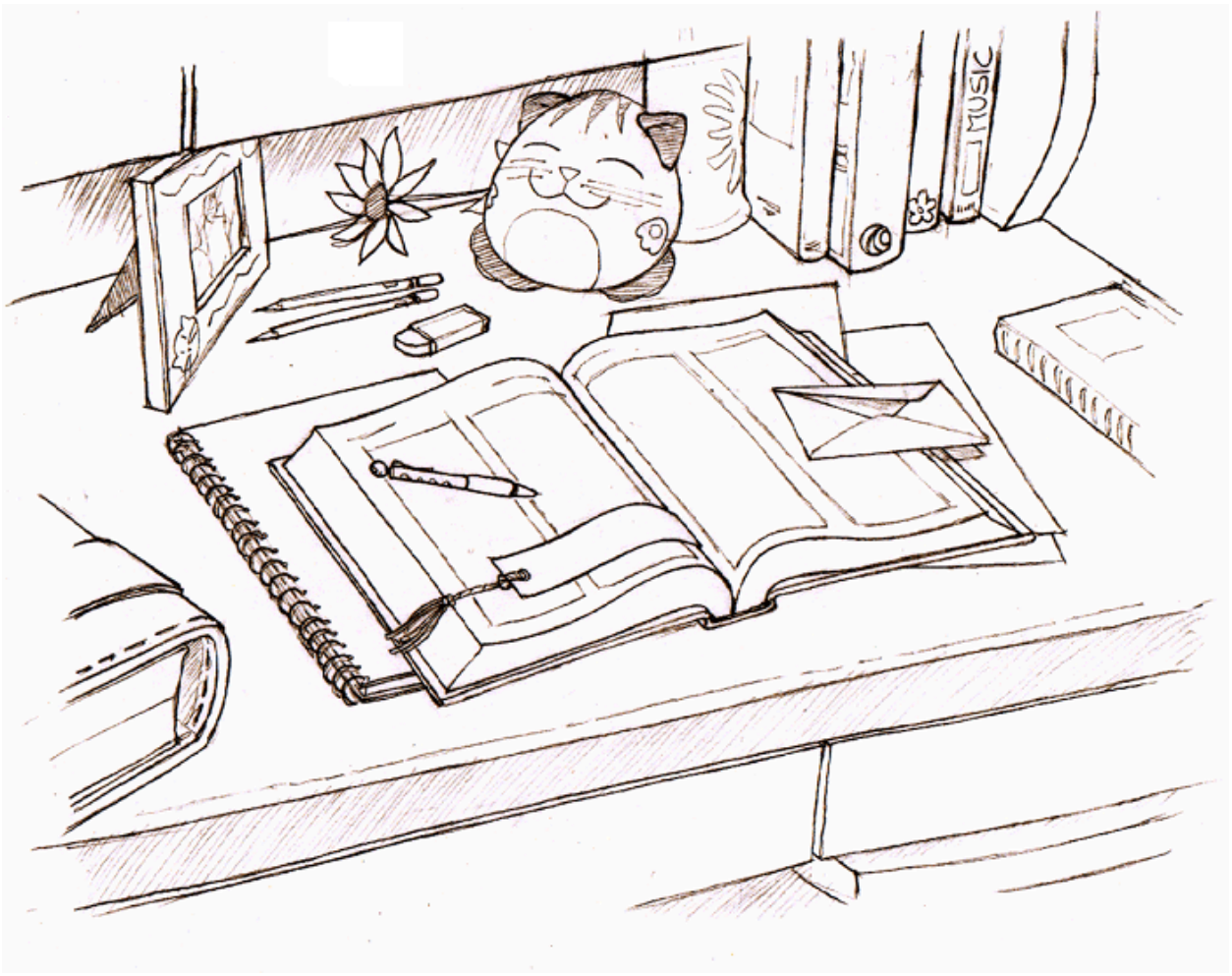
introduction

for those of you who are not familiar with doujinshi projects, comike, the series of true love story games, or dating simulation games in general, i'll try to be brief...

true love story 2 is a three disk dating / love simulation game for the sony playstation where you have a few months left in school before you have to move, and you have the opportunity to pursue one of the 12 or so girls in the game. the default name for the protagonist in the game is masato. in this story his main love interest is kasumi, a childhood friend.

this is a doujinshi, or 'fan work' that was produced for the mj-12 true love story doujin circle submission to the summer 1999 comike. comike is a twice-a-year event in japan where fan artists and 'circles' of artists gather to sell their works. like all fan works, this is based on characters and situations from a favorite game or anime.

i believe 'envelope' stands pretty well on it's own, but having knowledge of the original game does help. if you are confused, you can visit the official true love story sites for more information or just e-mail me, and i'll do my best to answer any questions.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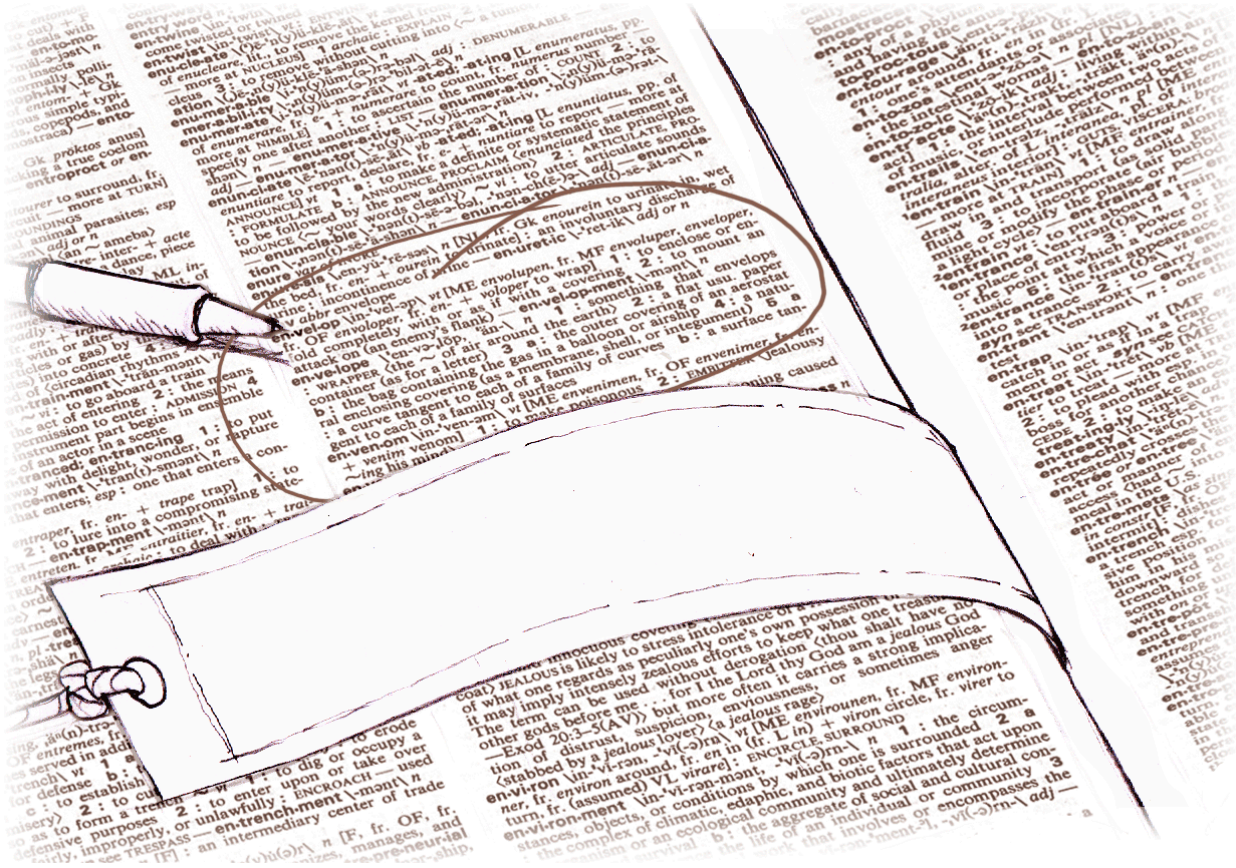
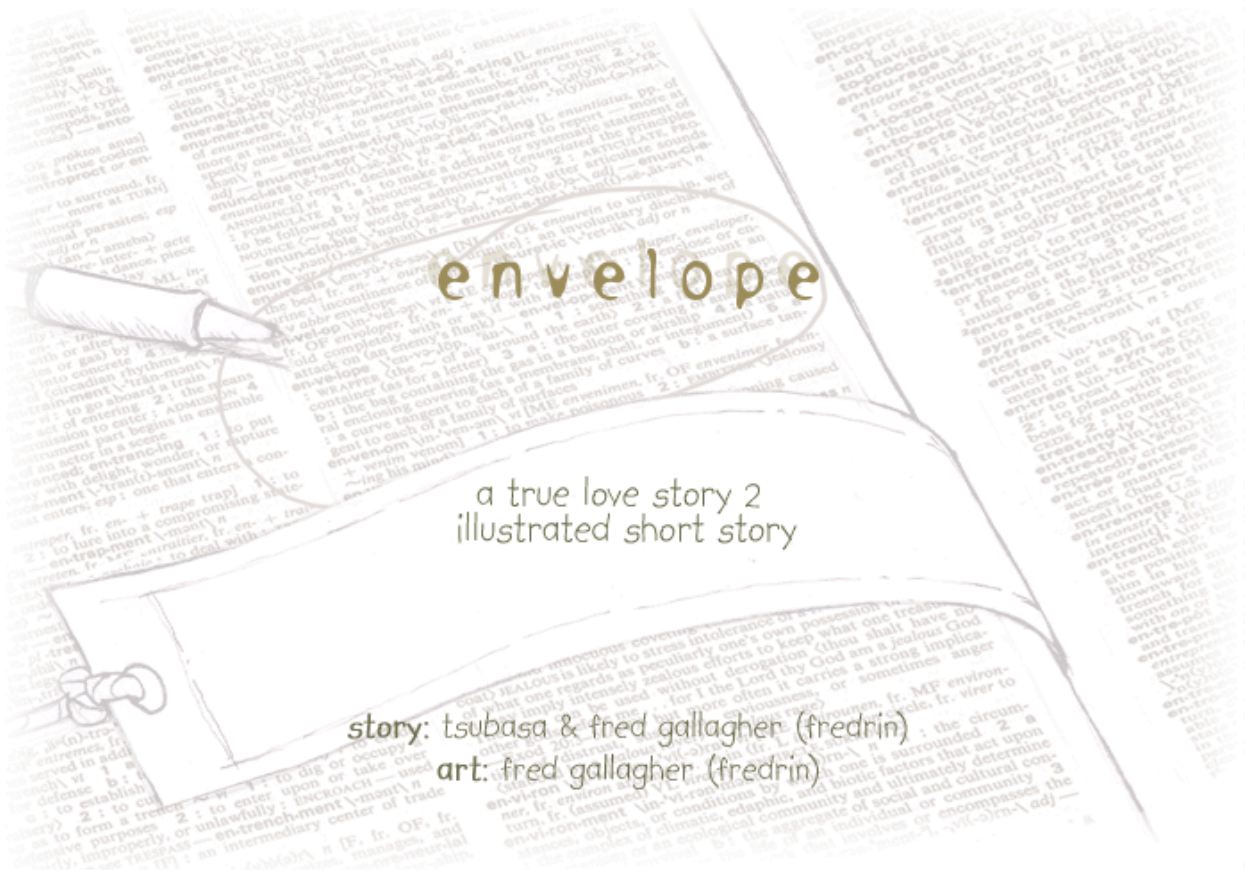
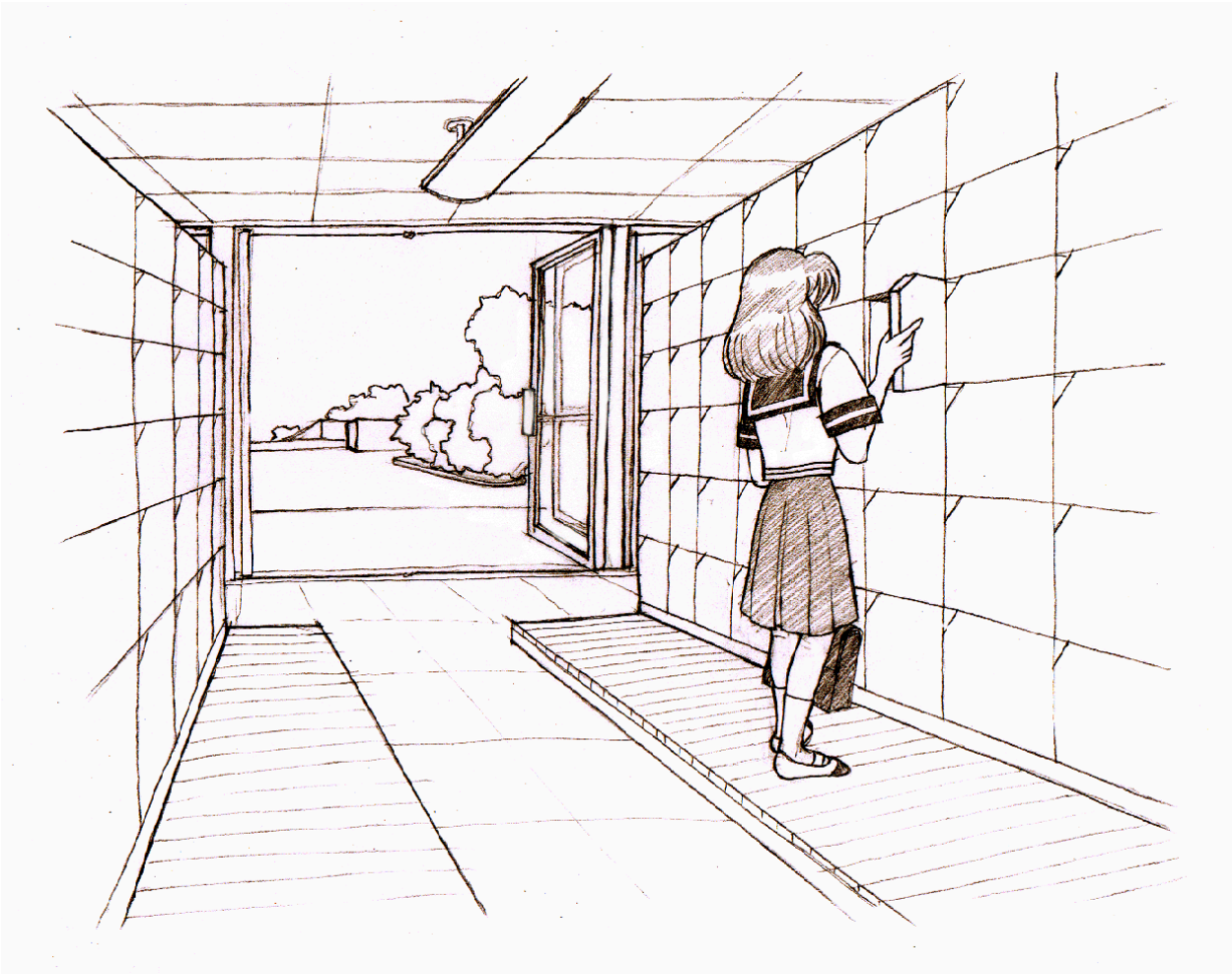
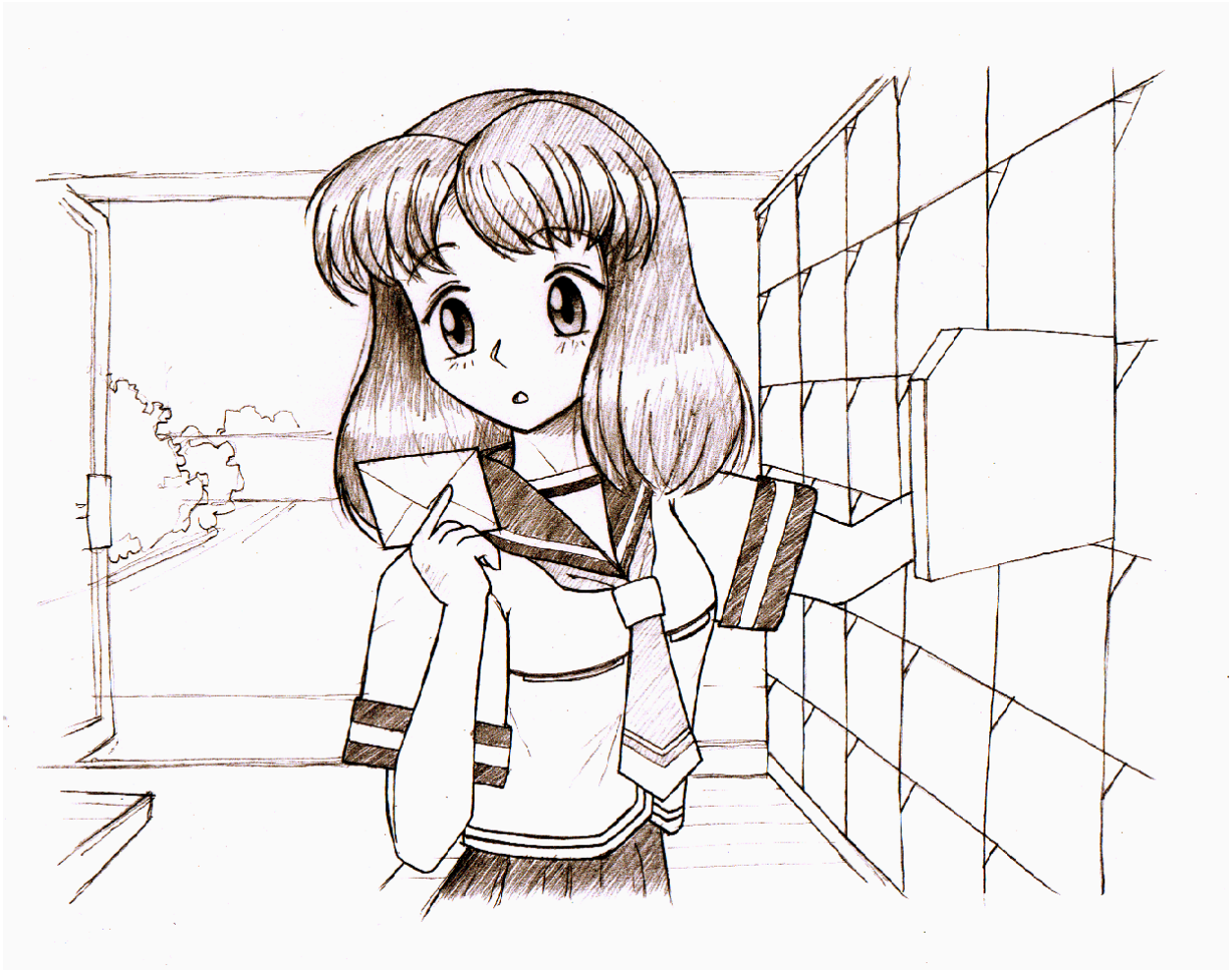


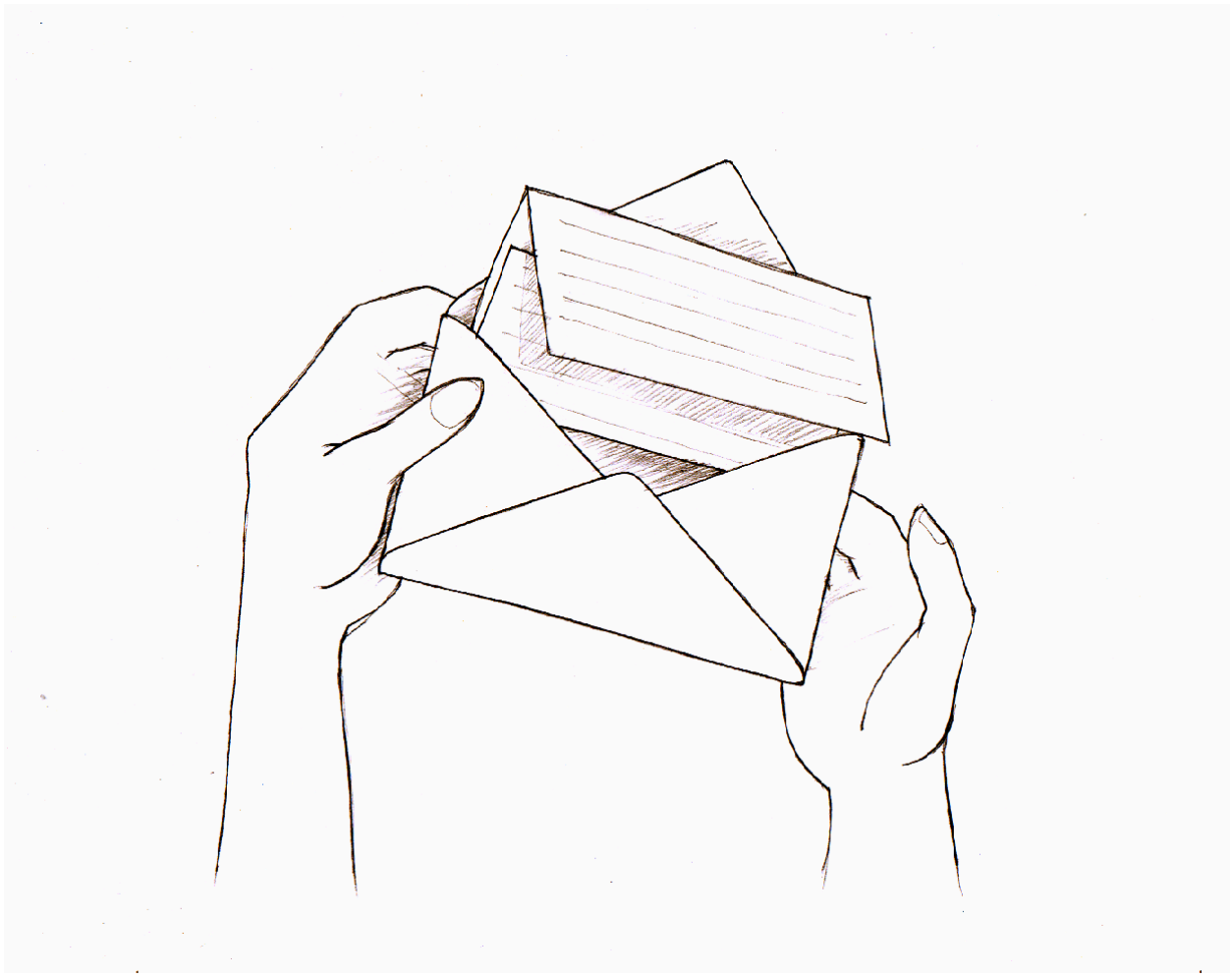

envelope
a true love story 2
illustrated short story
story: tsubasa & fred gallagher (fredrin)
art: fred gallagher (fredrin)



It was late afternoon, and most of the students had already gone home. Band practice had run very late that evening, so Kasumi would really have to get going if she was ever going to get her homework finished for the next day. It was late summer and the sun was still up, filling Aobadai High School with the warm, soft glow of the summer evening.

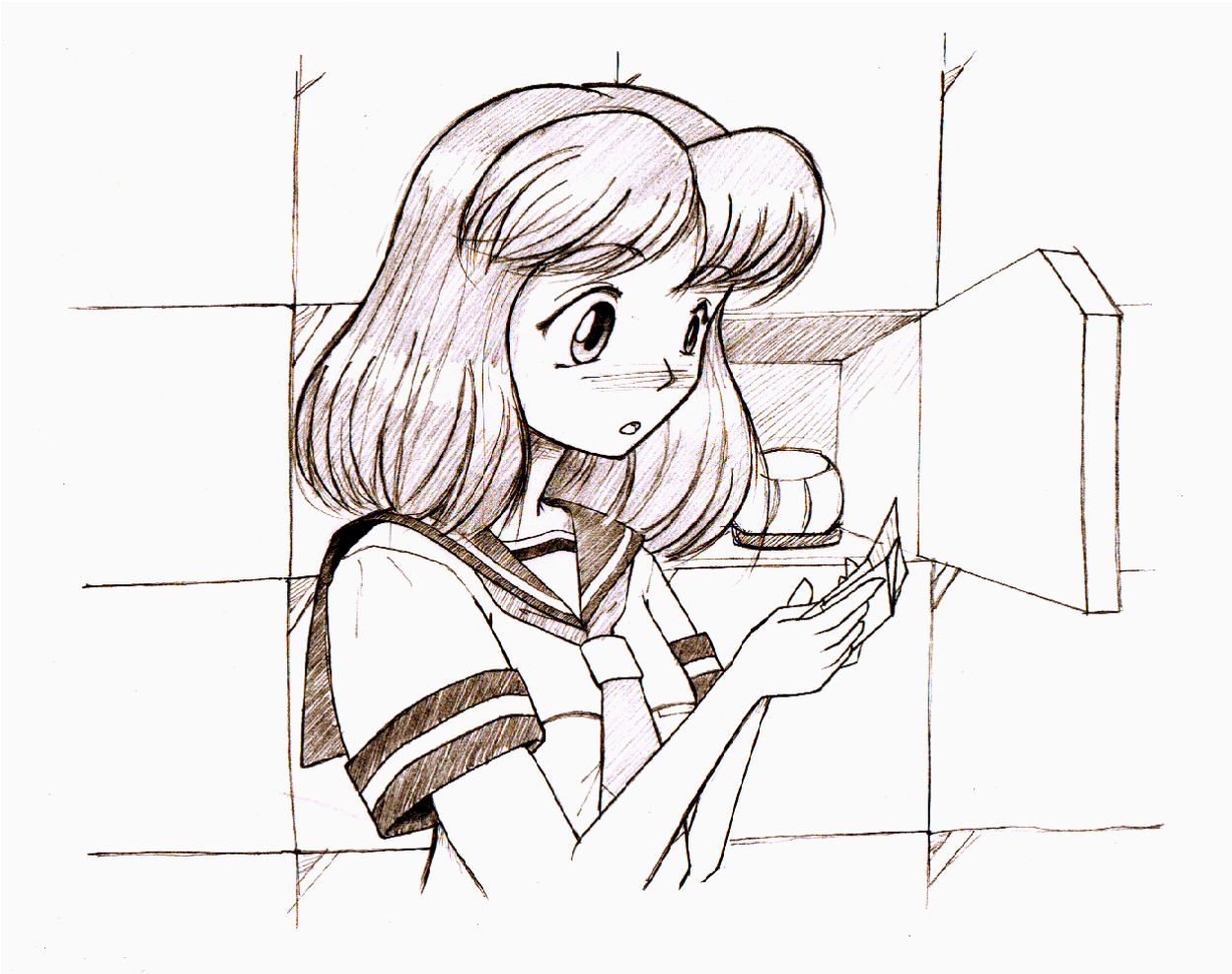


Kasumi opened her locker and slipped off her indoor shoes. As she reached for her street shoes, she was a little surprised to find a small envelope sitting on top of them. Puzzled, she opened the envelope and pulled out the letter inside. It read:



I wish I could tell you in person... every time I try, I just freeze up. I end up joking and laughing about something else. I want to tell you that I love you, and that I've loved you for a very long time.

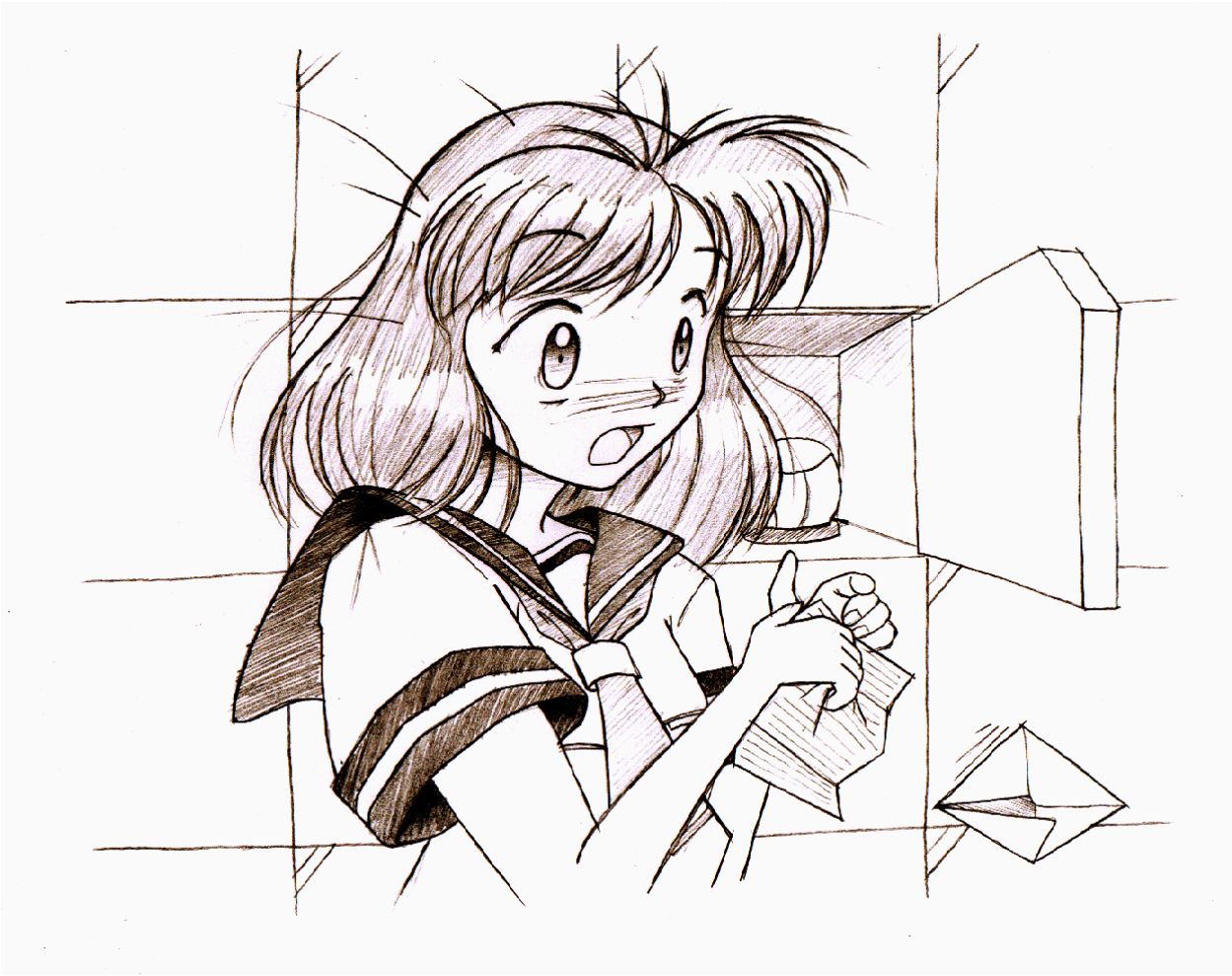
I just want you to know how I feel. I hope I can tell you in person someday.



"Wha... what is this?" she said, as she blinked and read it again.

The letter was scribbled with a thick pen on a small sheet of notepaper - almost illegible, as if the writer's hand was shaking when he wrote it. The letter wasn't signed, and there was nothing on the envelope - it was blank.

Kasumi looked around, her heart in a panic. Who wrote this? Who was it from? It was late, and there was barely anyone on the school grounds. Someone had left it recently, because she had been to her locker earlier that afternoon. For some reason, she expected to see him nearby, as if he had just left it.

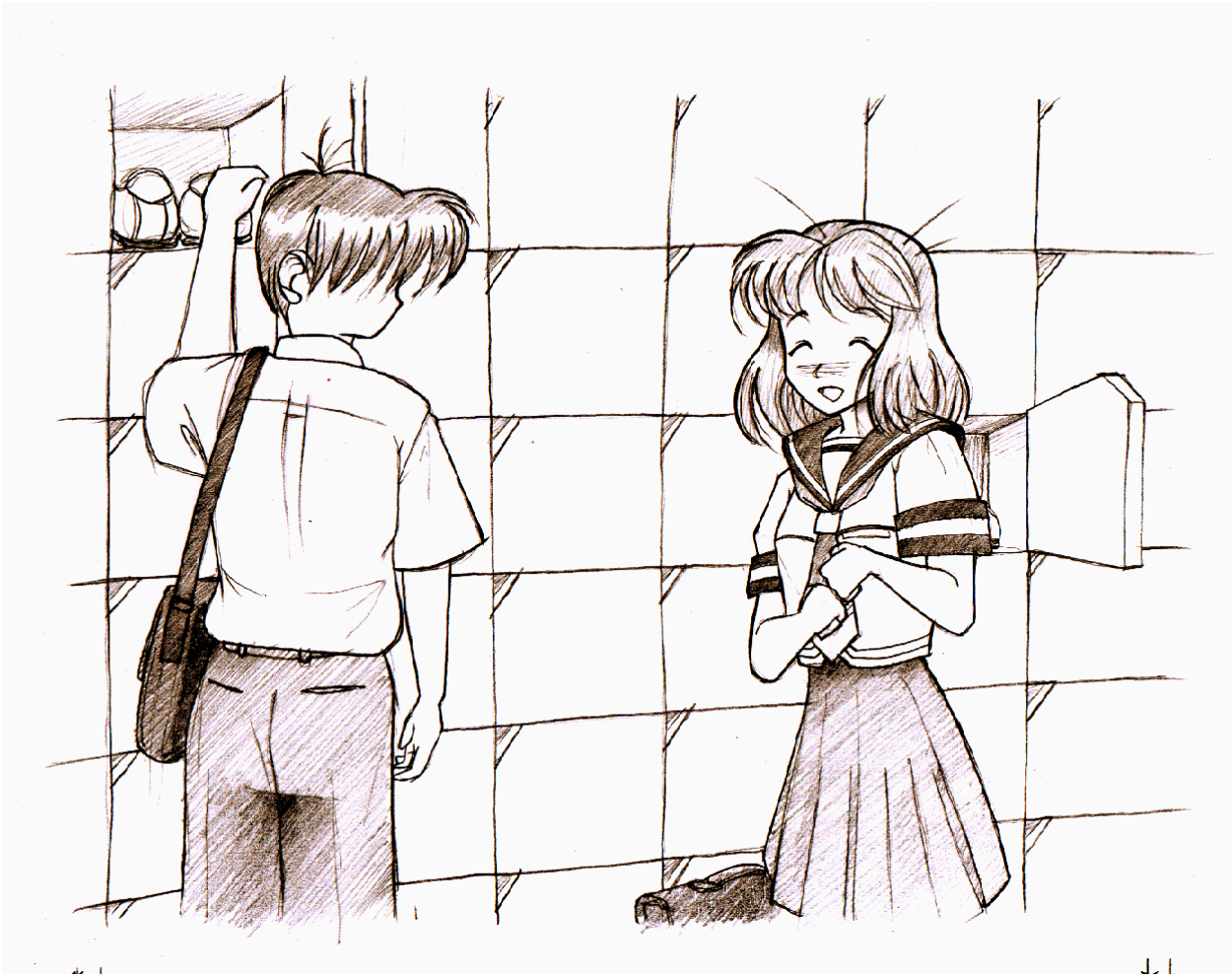


"Ah, Kasumi," a voice said, "you're here late too?"

Kasumi gasped, gripping the note close to her chest - not noticing as the envelope dropped to the floor.

"Masato-kun!"

Masato came around the corner, grumbling to himself. "Hatano roped me into helping her club put together some stage sets. What a pain," he said. "Did your club run late again tonight?" he asked.

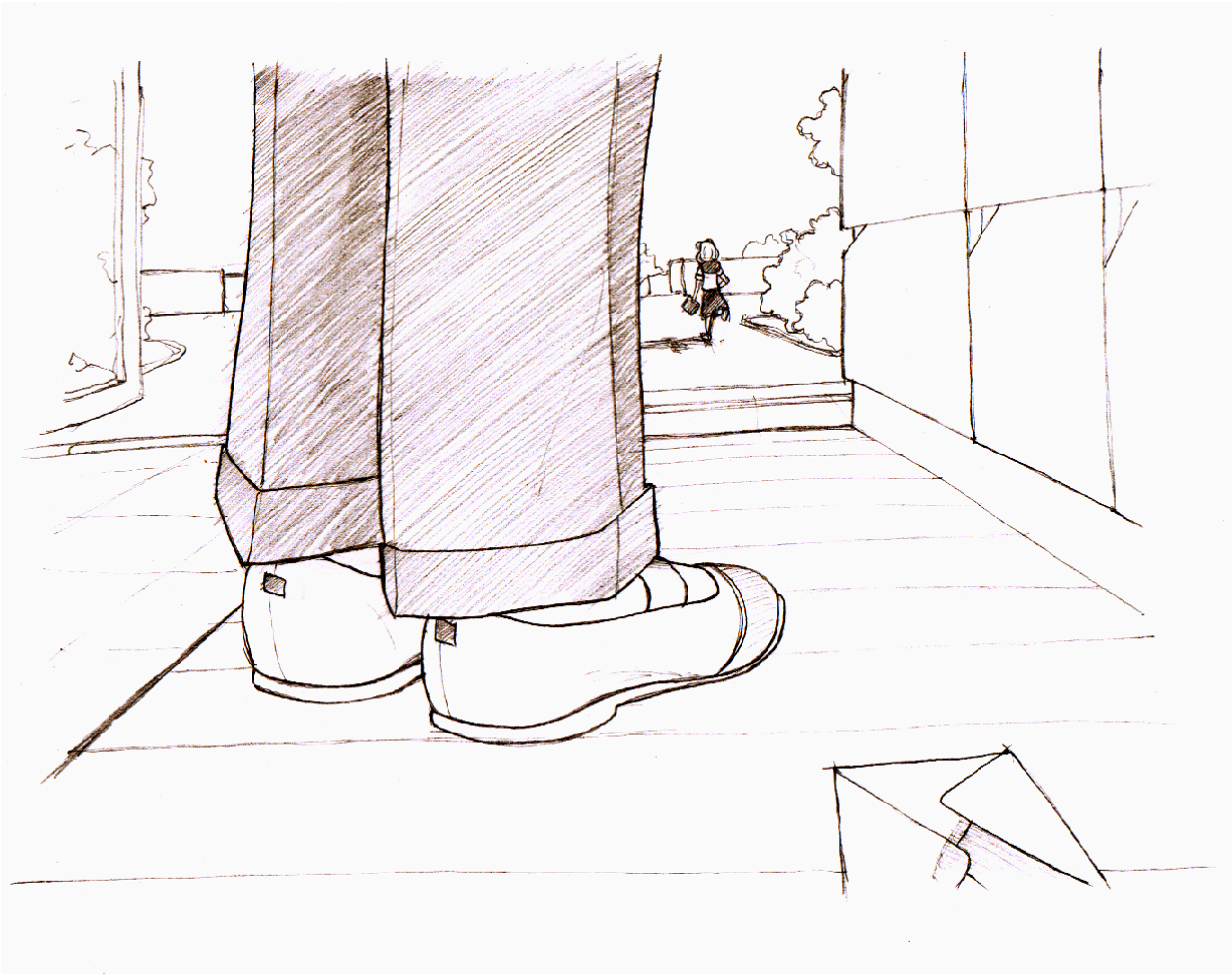


He reached for his locker and pulled out his shoes. Kasumi opened her mouth to speak, closed it, then tried again.

"Ah, uhm," she said, forcing a smile. "Uuhmuhm! With the concert coming up in a few weeks, we have to practice really hard."

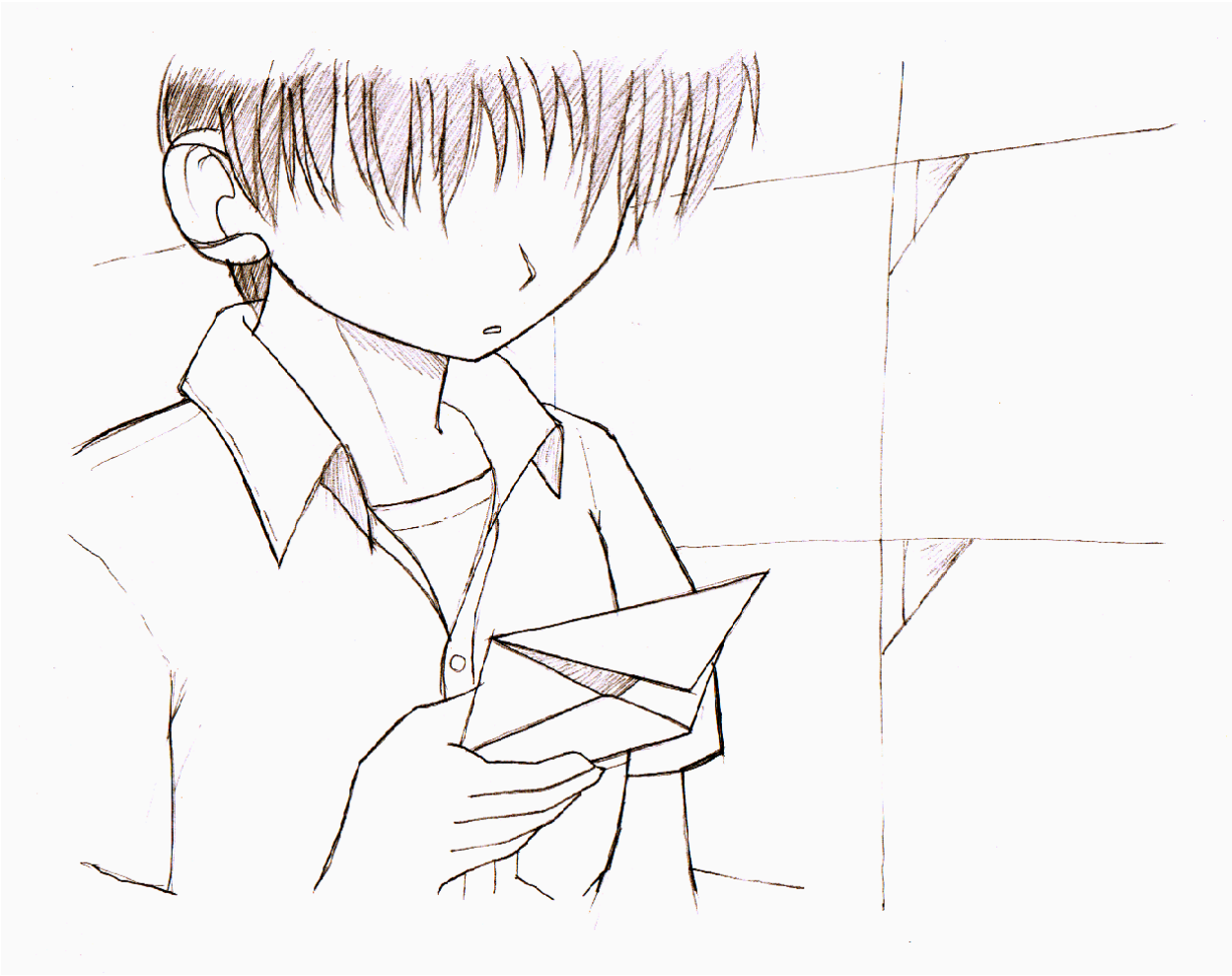
"Oh," he said, noticing that she seemed a little flustered. "You ok, Kasumi? You look kinda upset."

She shuddered a little. "Hm? Oh! No, not at all! I'm just late! I need to get going! I just wanted to get home earlier, I ... have a lot of homework to do!" She grabbed her bag and her shoes, darted to the end of the platform and slipped them on.



"I'm sorry, I really need to get going! Bye!" she called out, and hurried away.

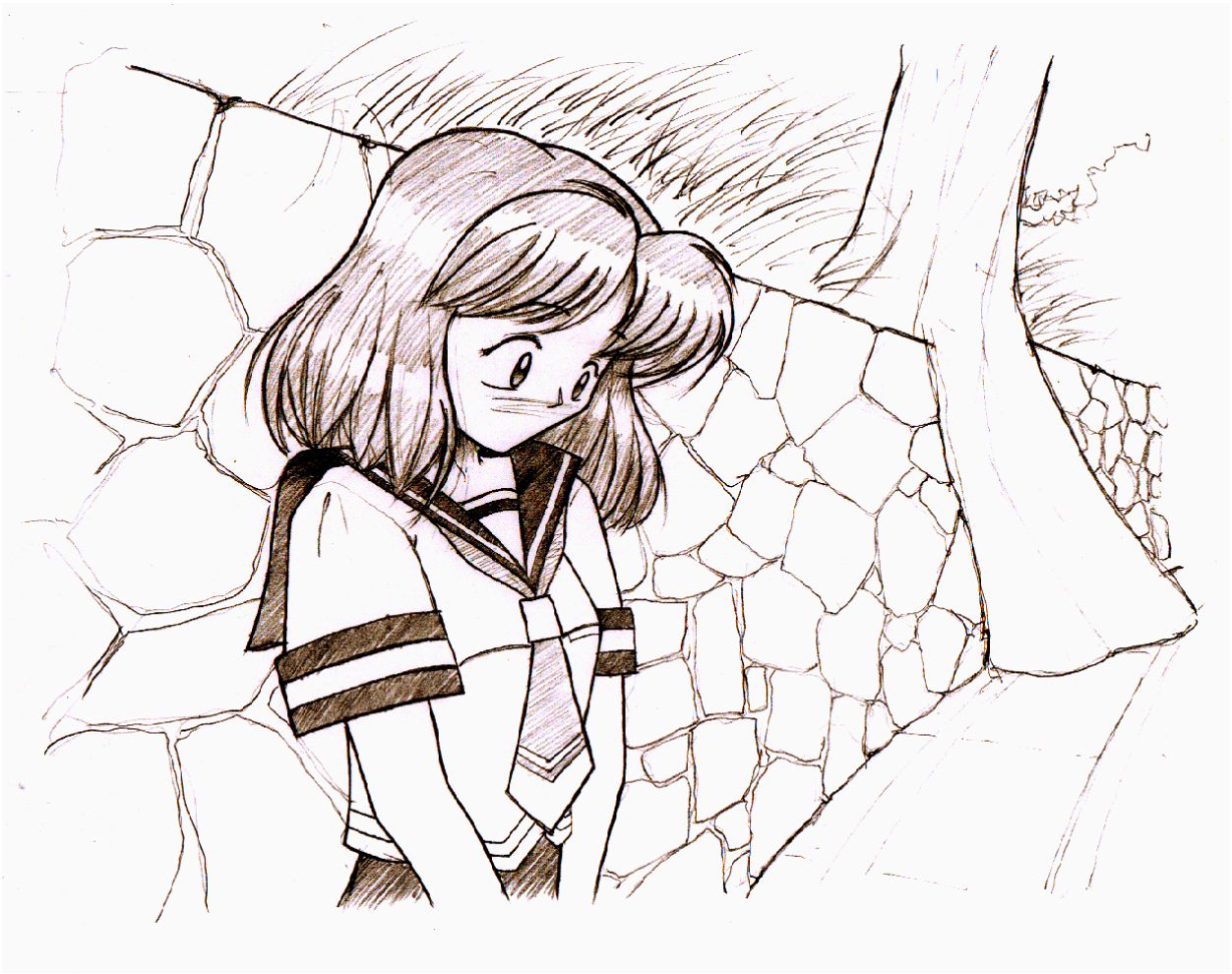
Somewhat startled, Masato looked after her. After she disappeared through the gate, he looked at her open locker, and then down to where her indoor shoes still sat on the floor. Lying next to them was an open envelope. He reached down and picked the shoes and the envelope up off the floor.



He looked at the envelope. It was a small, plain white envelope with no decorations. It was blank, and there was nothing inside of it. What the heck was this all about?

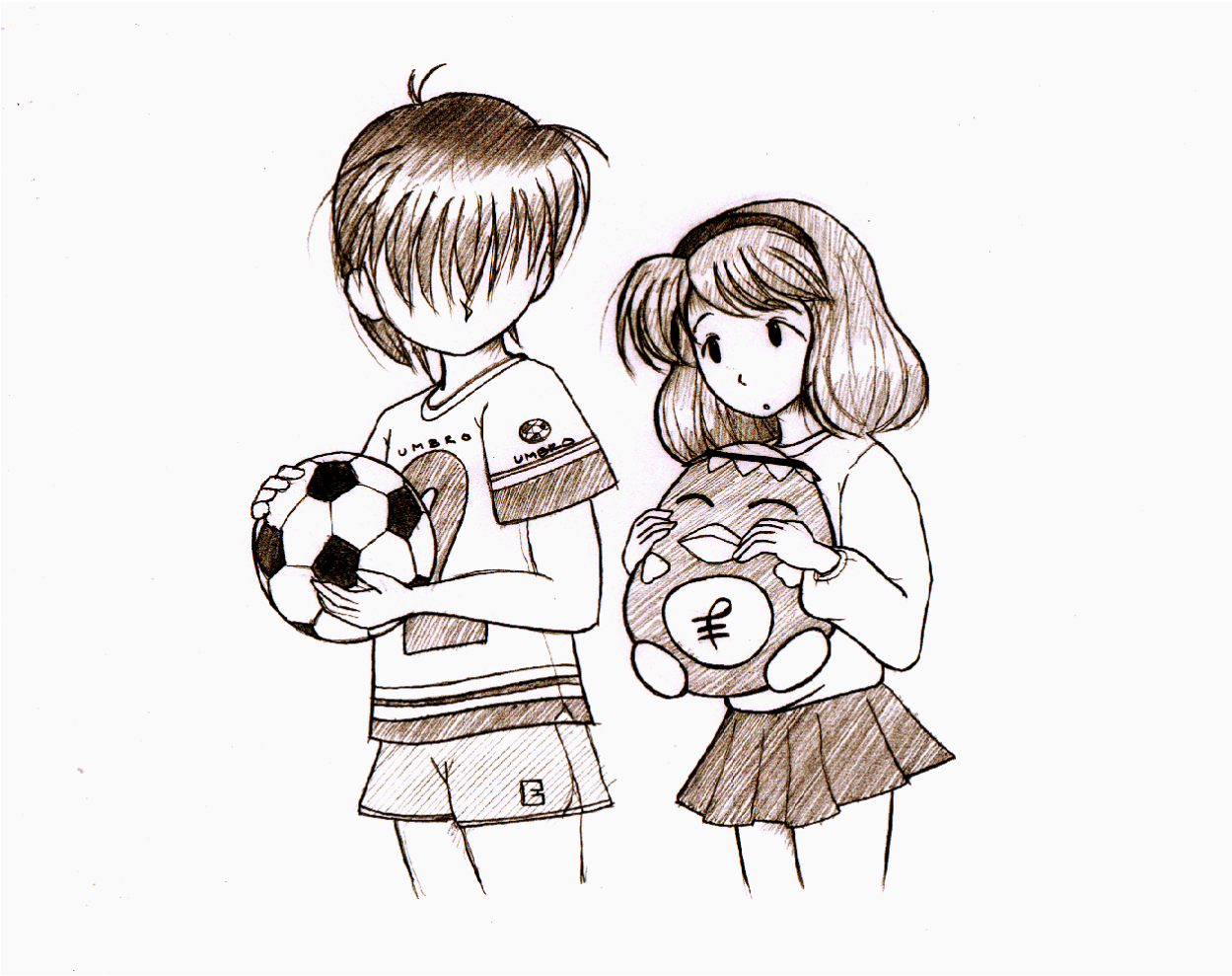
Had Kasumi received some kind of note? A letter?

He placed her shoes carefully inside the locker, and closed the door. He then looked out to where she had disappeared behind the gate.

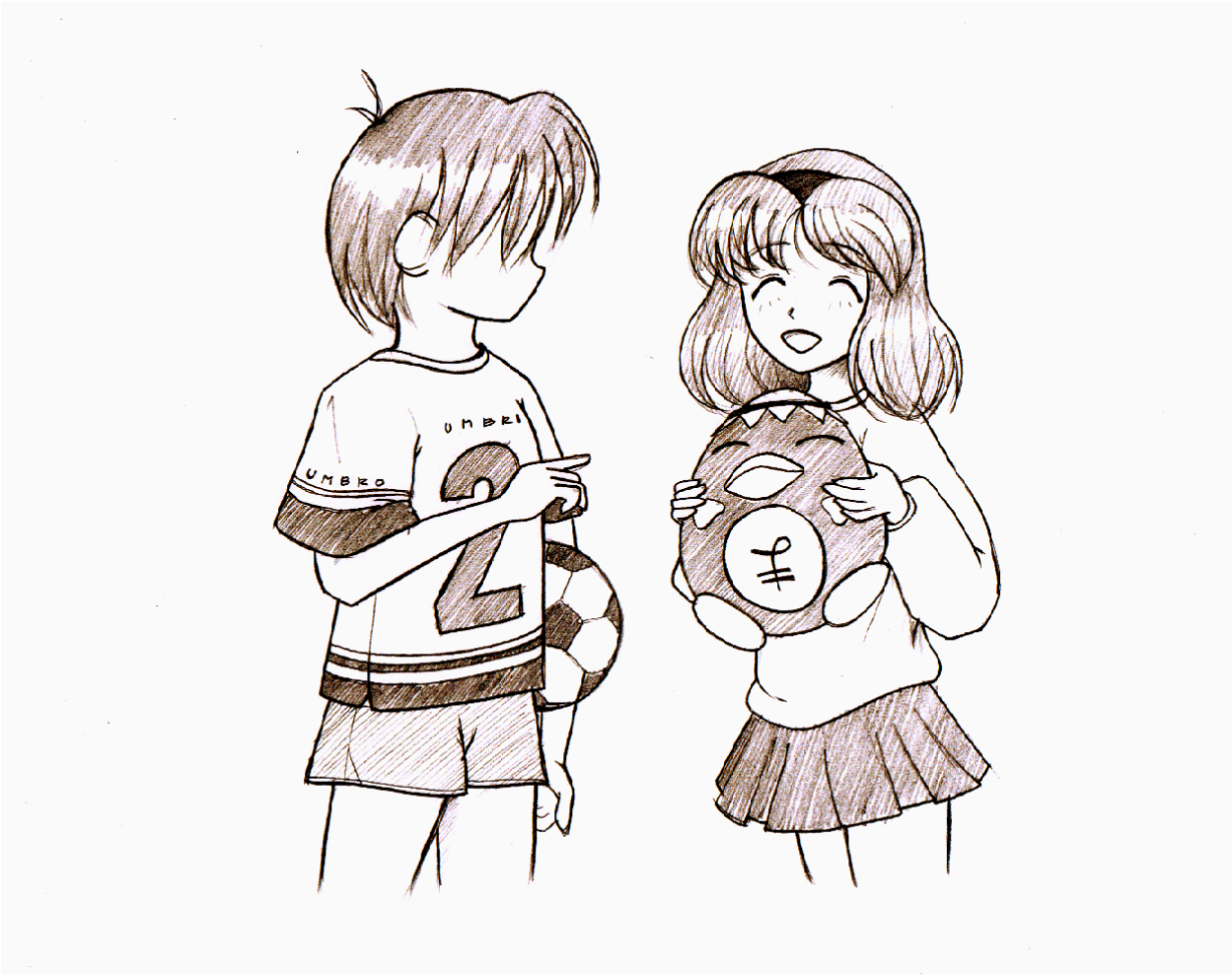


Someways down the road, Kasumi stopped to catch her breath. She looked back, over her shoulder, to make sure Masato hadn't followed her.

Masato-kun? Could it be?



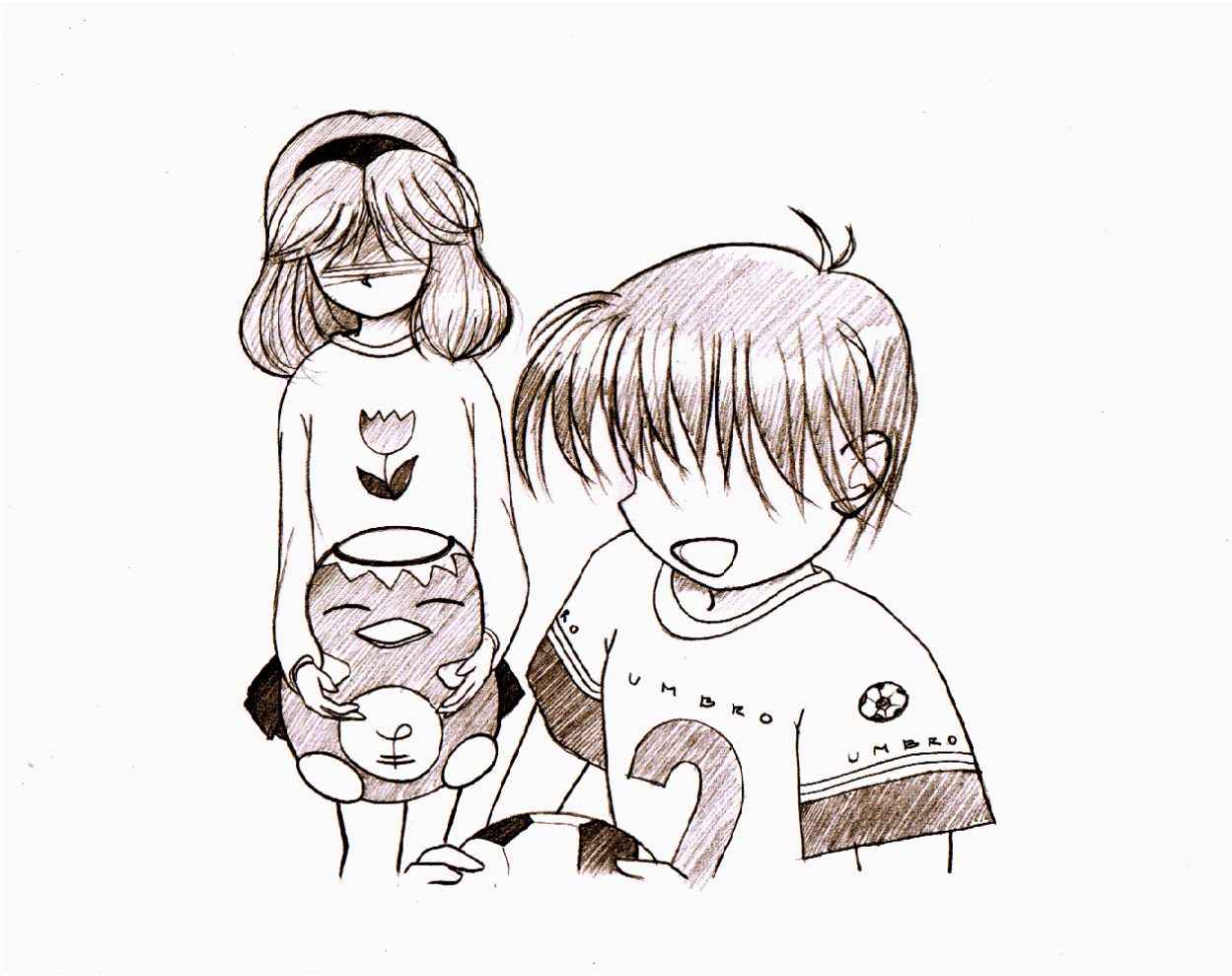
Kasumi and Masato had known each other since they were little kids. They used to play together. There were many times that Masato had been mean to her, or would leave her behind while he ran off to play with other kids. Yet, if there were ever any trouble, or if she needed him, he had always been there for her.



She had feelings for him that went deeper than he was aware of - deeper than she was willing to admit to herself. But honestly, she didn't really know what he thought about her. Usually, he seemed to consider her just a "good friend". It made her sad sometimes...

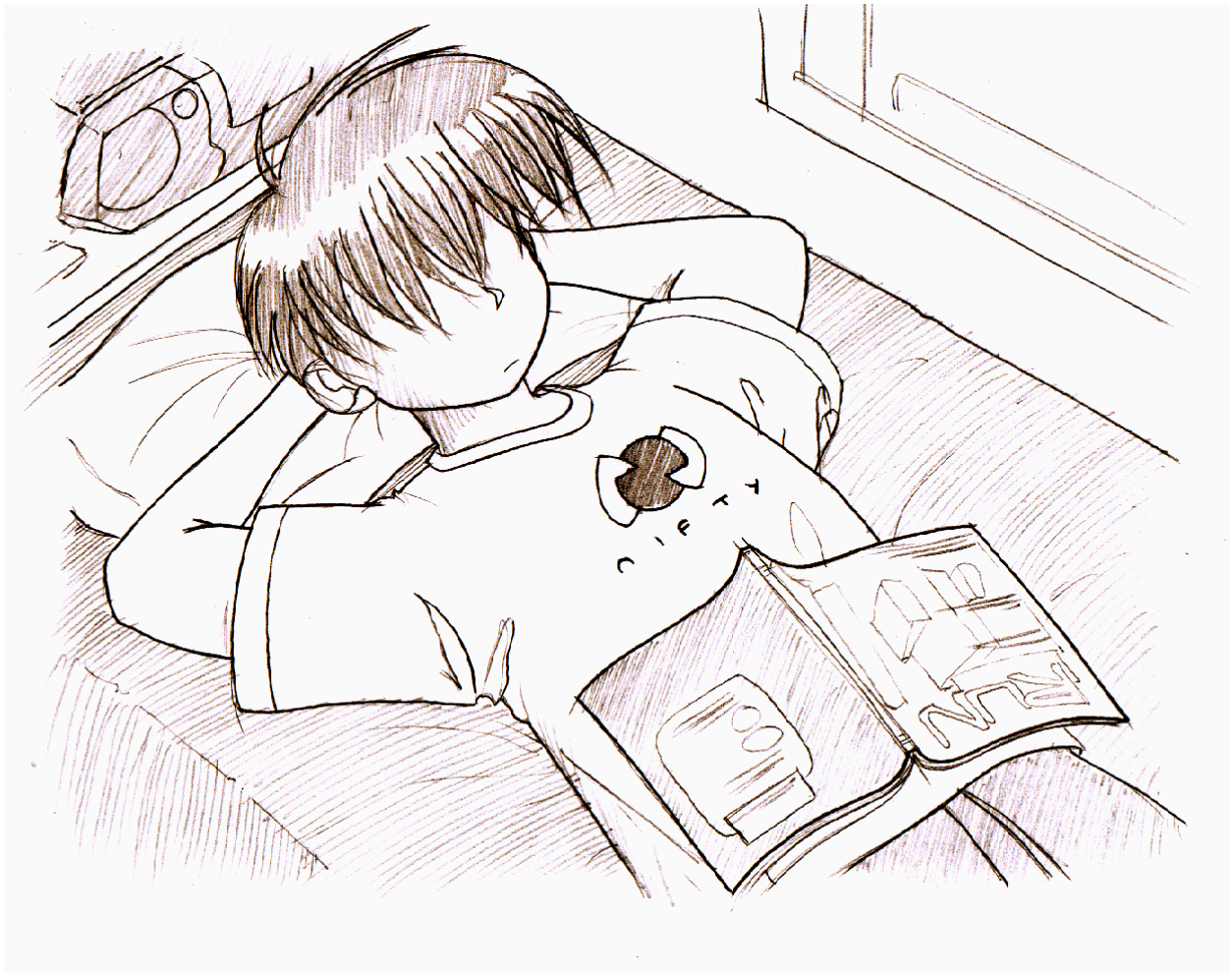
But this letter - was he trying to tell her how he really felt? But why in a letter? And since they knew each other so well, why couldn't he tell her? It was the kind of thing he might do, but she wasn't sure.

She wondered...What was he thinking?



When Masato thought about it, Kasumi had always been a part of his life. Sometimes, he figured that he hadn't always paid enough attention to her. Over the years, they had spent so much time together - she was just always there, and it seemed like she always would be.

But... what would happen if she met another guy? What if Kasumi fell in love with someone else? She wouldn't be a part of his life anymore...

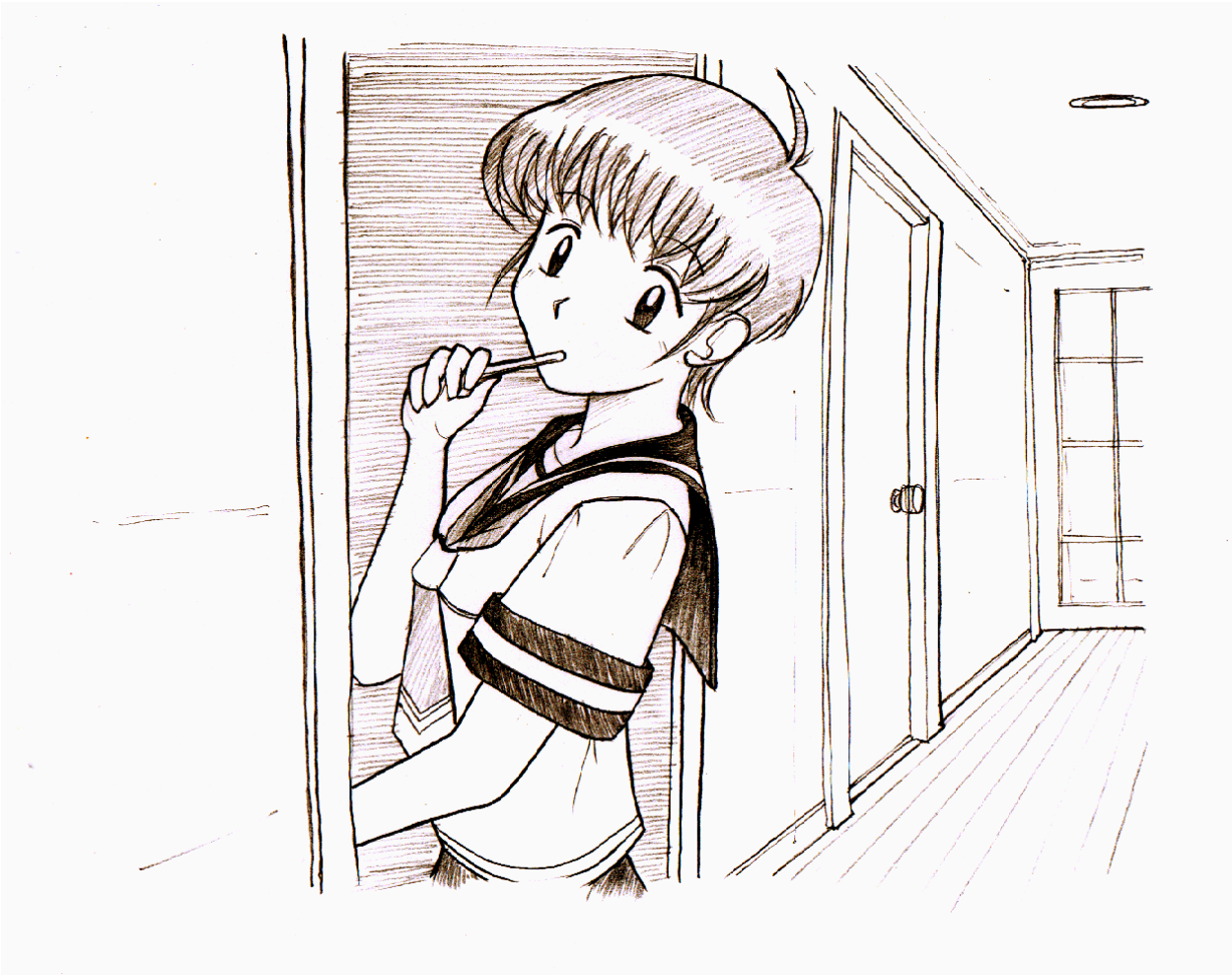


Masato couldn't sleep. Ever since he had found the envelope that afternoon it had bothered him. Kasumi's weird behavior, her agitation, the way she ran off... it had to be a love letter of some sort. He couldn't remember Kasumi ever having received a love note before. Maybe it was no big deal - a secret admirer, someone who just had a crush on her. But he couldn't see Kasumi reacting like that to a simple love letter. Was it something more serious?

Maybe she just never told him about any love letters she might have gotten. Perhaps she was upset because he had caught her with one... she was at school pretty late, and he normally wouldn't have been there. It suddenly occurred to him that perhaps Kasumi had things going on in her life that he didn't know about.

That thought made him even more uneasy. Was it possible that Kasumi was seeing someone else?

Why did it bother him so much?



"Oniichan?" Kimiko said in amazement, looking at him from the hallway, toothbrush still in mouth.

"Ah, 'morning Kimiko," Masato said, getting ready to go out the door.

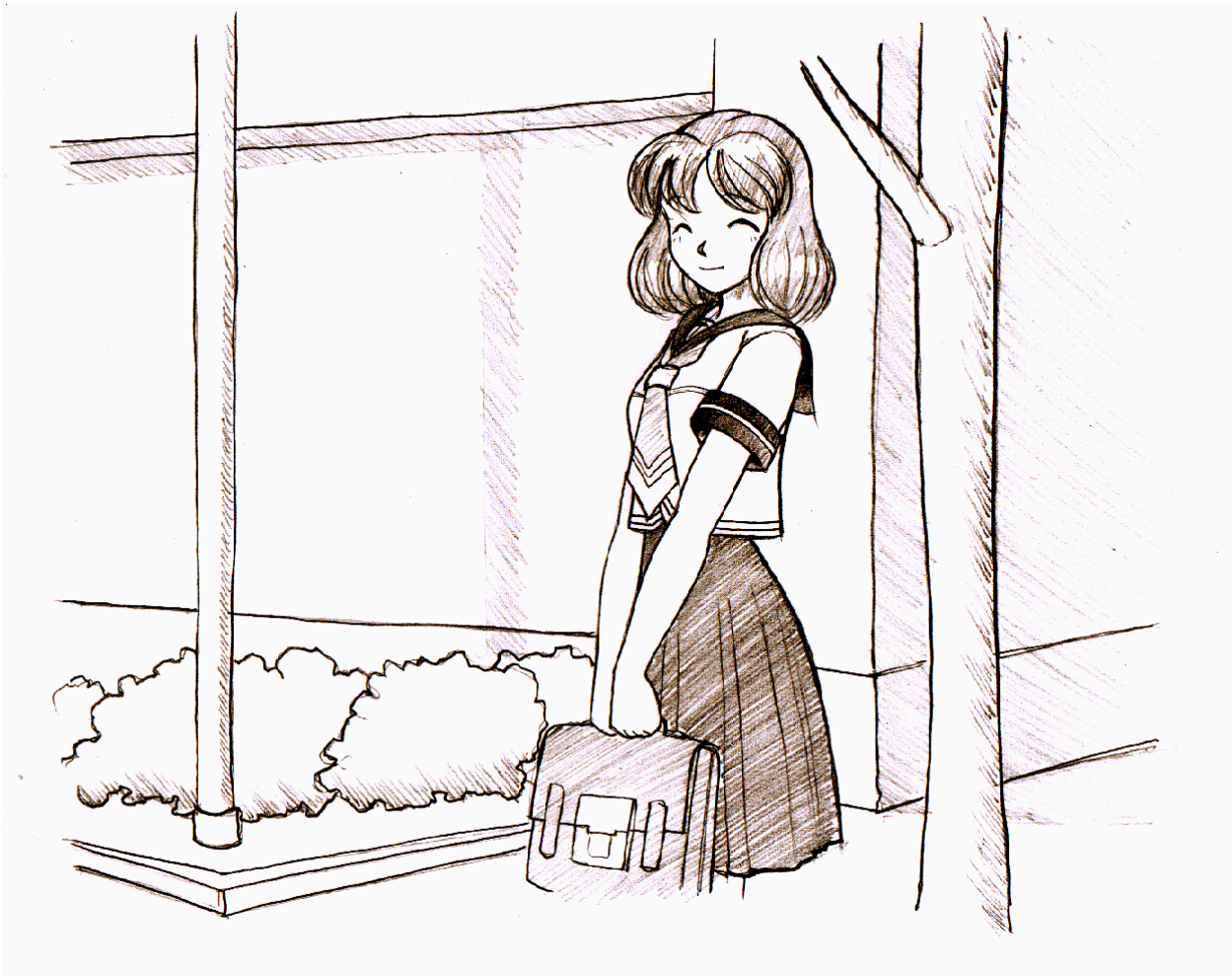
She looked at him in awe. "You're... leaving early? You're... dressed? You're... awake?"

Masato grimaced at her. "Oh, shut up... I just need to get to school early today," he said.

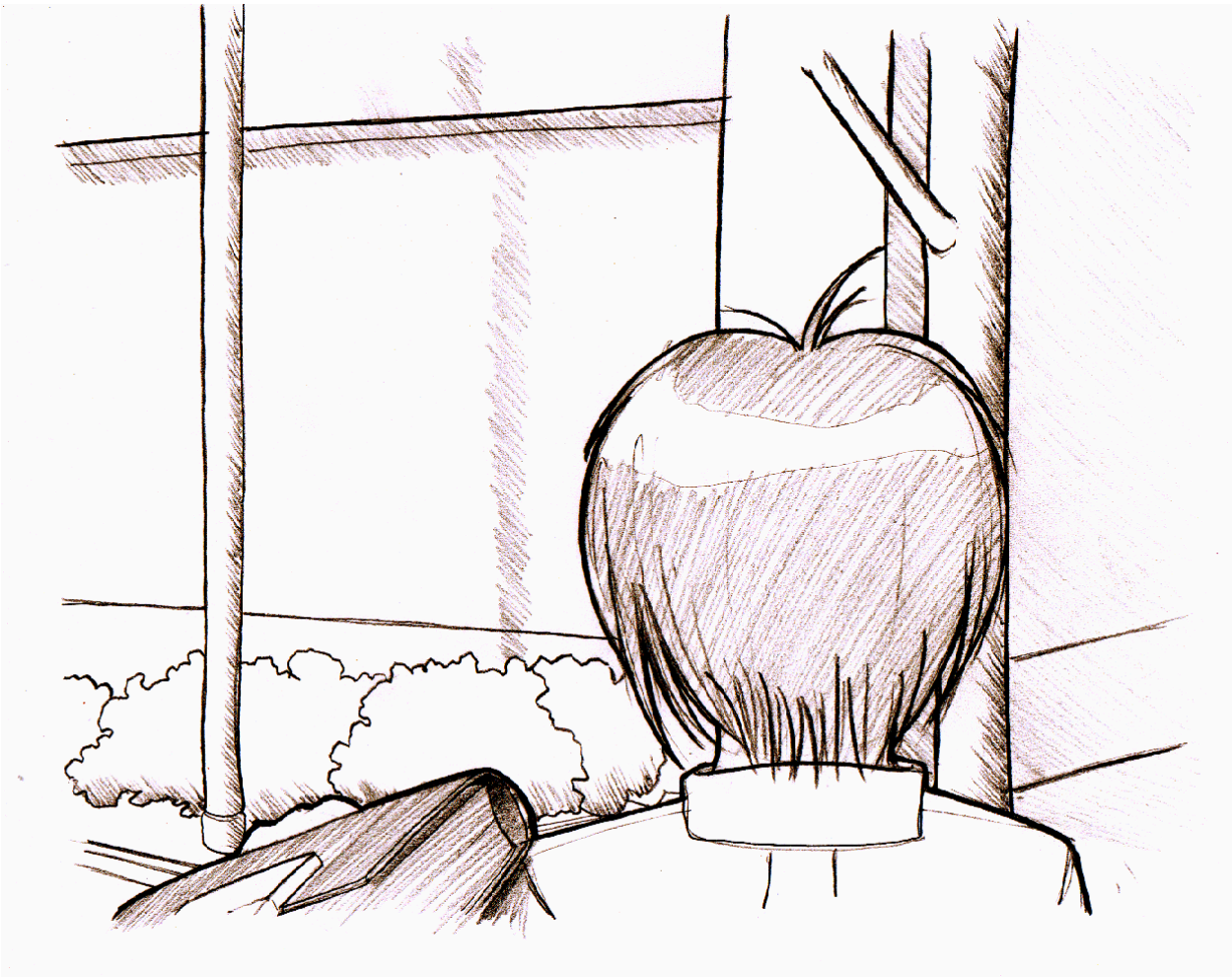
Of course, the real reason he was leaving early was so that he could catch up with Kasumi. He would wait for her where they normally met in the morning. He just couldn't wait to talk with her any longer.

"See you later," he said, and went out the door.

Kimiko stood there, toothbrush still in mouth. "What's with him this morning?" she asked.



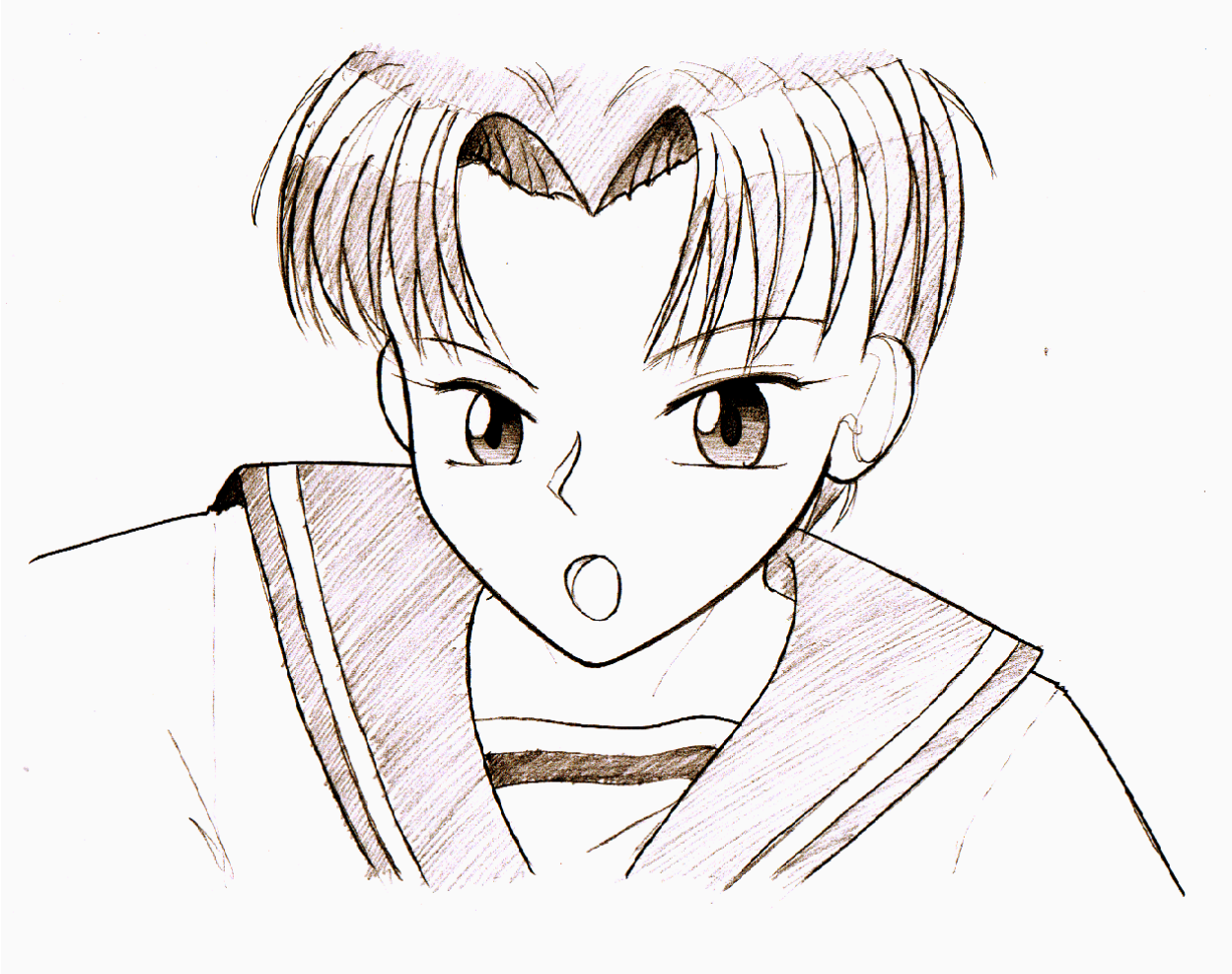
Recently, they had been walking to school together. Kasumi was usually waiting for him when he arrived downstairs. He didn't even think about it, she was usually just there. This morning, he was hoping that she was there, like always.



This morning she wasn't there. Perhaps he was too early? Maybe she hadn't left yet.

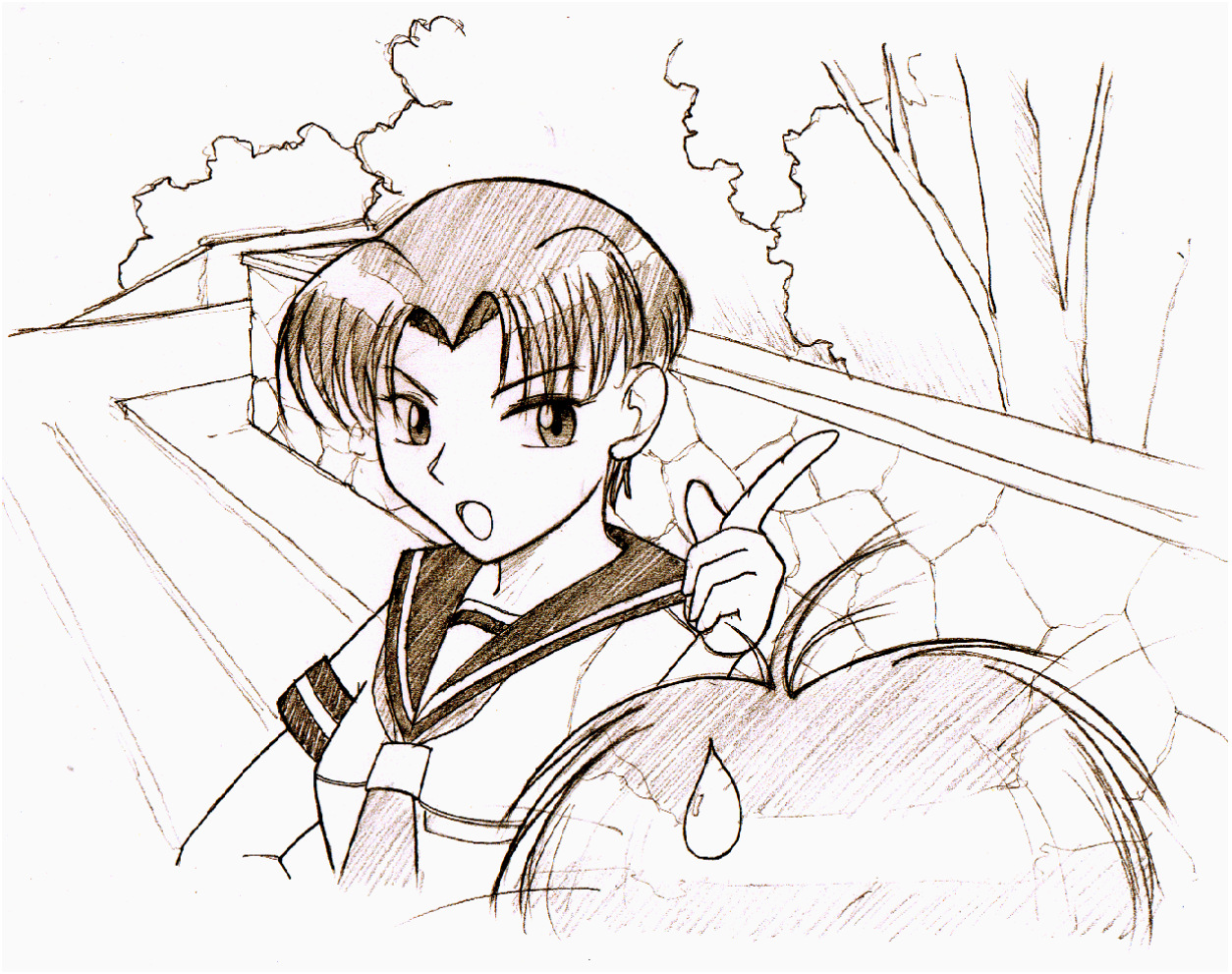
After a while, he began to worry. She lived in the same complex, so it would be hard to miss each other in the morning. Had she left early? Had she gone to school by another route?

He started to walk to school. Was she avoiding him? Had she gone to school a different way? Why? Perhaps he would find her on the way. Would he find her closer to the school? He needed to talk to her.



"Masato!" came a loud voice.

He looked up to find Hatano standing there, glaring at him. "Hatano...san...," he said, taken aback by her glare. "Ah, what's wrong?"



"What kind of stupid idiotic moron are you?" she asked, getting in his face, causing him to back up several steps. "Where are your guts? What's the matter with you?!"

Masato blinked. "What... what are you talking about?" he asked, cringing under her intense glare.

"You have some kinda nerve - messing with a girl's feelings that way. You've known her for years; you of all people should know how sensitive she is. Idiot!"

"But... I didn't do anything!"

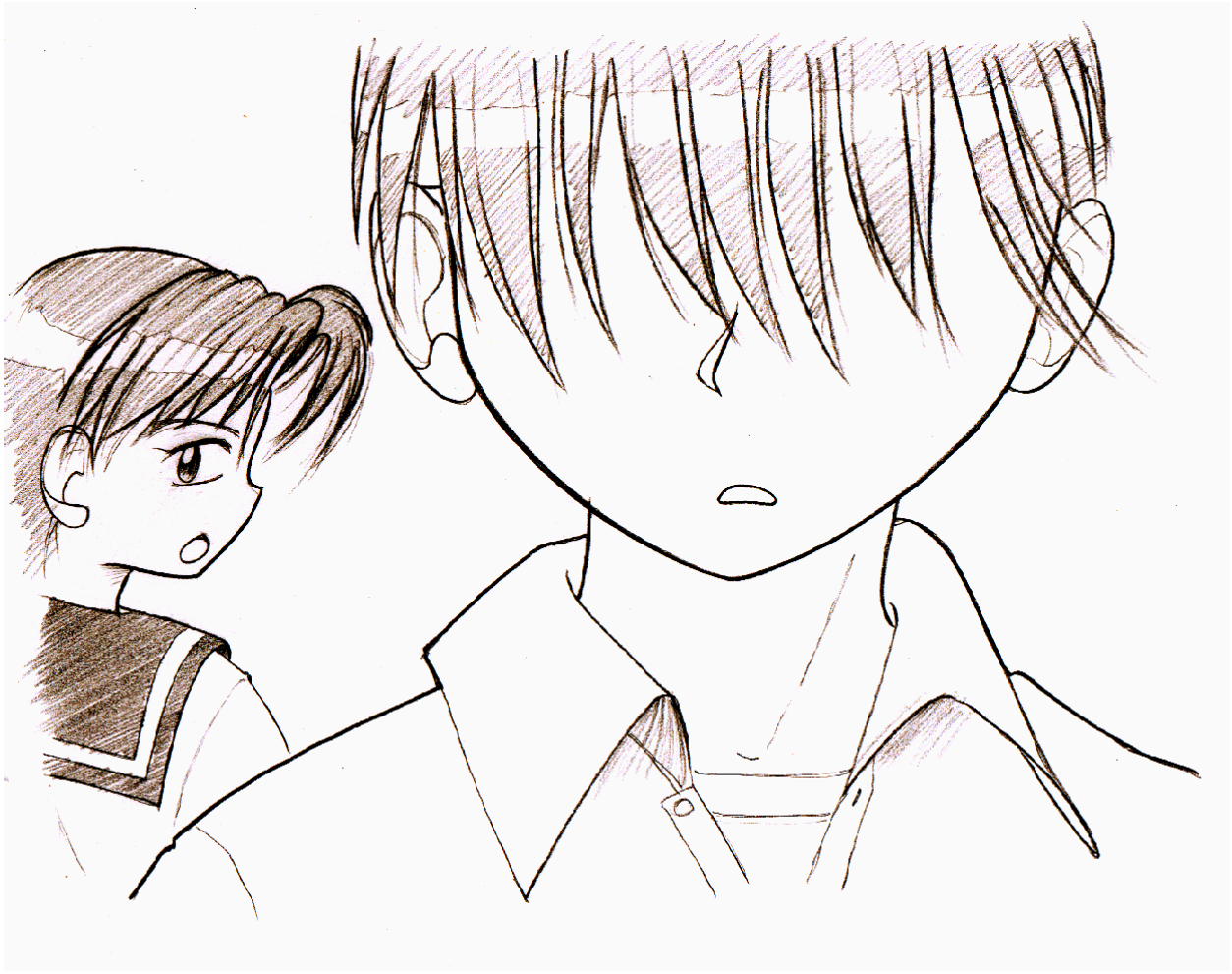
"That's kind of the point, isn't it?"

He blinked at her.

"She told me about the letter," she said, quietly.

"She did?" he asked, his heart sinking.

Hatano seemed angry, but there was something else in her look he didn't quite understand.



He didn't know how to respond. All he could do was look blankly at her. She walked past him, turning her head toward him as she passed.

"Make up your mind, Masato. You can't just leave it like this."

How... did Hatano know what he was thinking? Did she really know? Or was she guessing? He himself didn't know how he really felt. Hatano teased him often about Kasumi, and how he needed to treat her better.

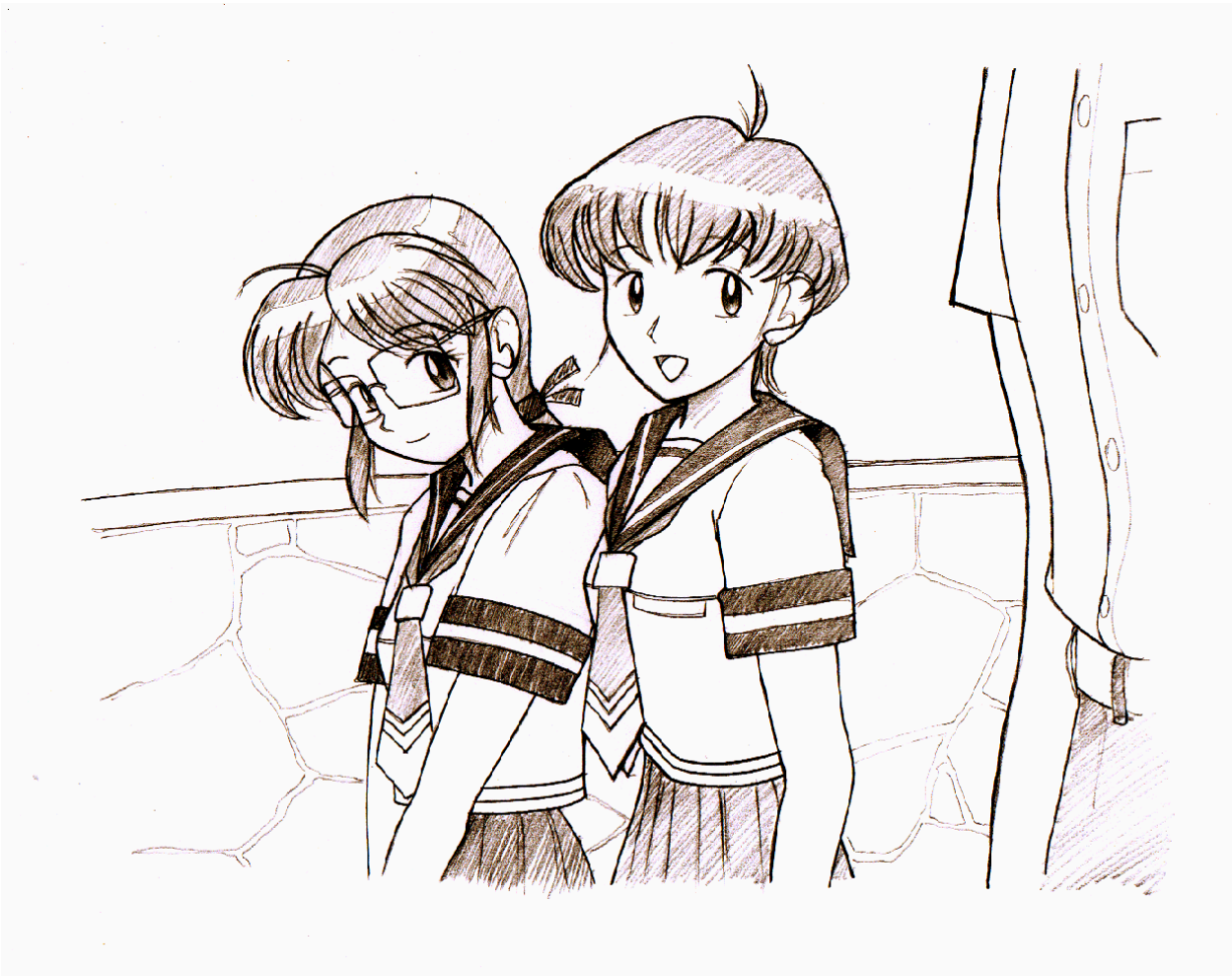
-"I didn't do anything!" ... "that's kind of the point, isn't it?"-

He now knew why he was so upset. Kasumi was on the verge of slipping away from him. It had never been a question before that she would just, just - always be there. It wasn't something that was supposed to change.

But now, she must have someone else - someone who was going to take her away from him. Kasumi was a kind and caring girl... perhaps she didn't want to tell him? Maybe she didn't know how? Was that why she was avoiding him?

His heart was hurting now. Kasumi had obviously talked with Hatano about this. Hatano must have known, even more than he did, how he really felt - and that was why she was mad at him. He had treated Kasumi badly, and now she was gone...

He hurried on - he *really* needed to talk to her. But as he got closer to the school, he stopped. What about Kasumi? What would really make her happy?



"Ah, Oniichan! What are you doing? You'll be late!" said Kimiko, who was walking to school with Sanae-chan.

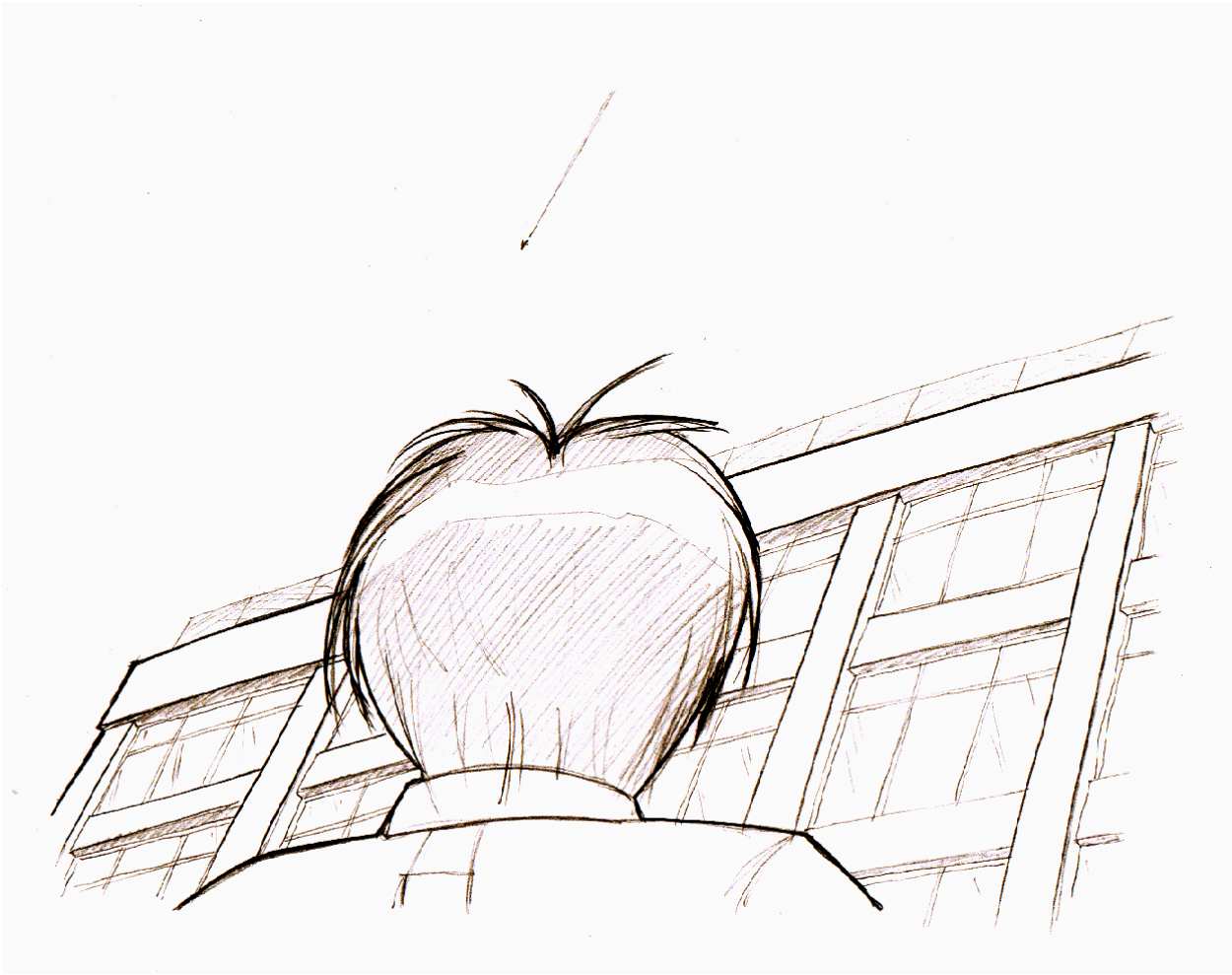
She stopped and looked at him. "You ok?" she asked.

He looked up. "Yea! Just fine. I just forgot something."

She sniffed and walked on, and whispered to Sanae, loud enough for him to hear, "I betya he forgot that my birthday's right around the corner."

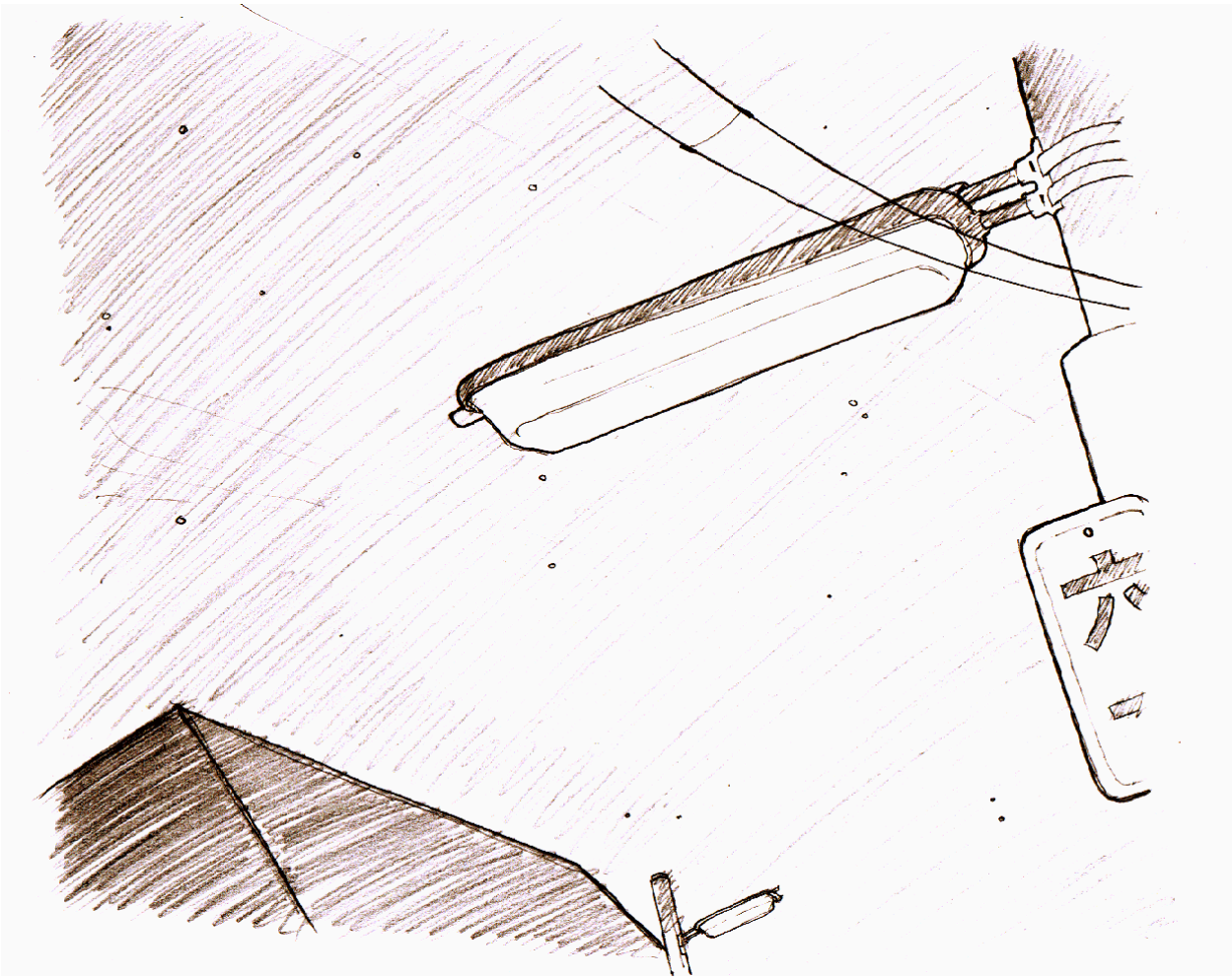
"Bai!" she waved, and the two of them walked on.

He laughed uneasily and inwardly groaned. It was a not-so-subtle hint, especially since he'd forgotten to get her something for her birthday the previous year.

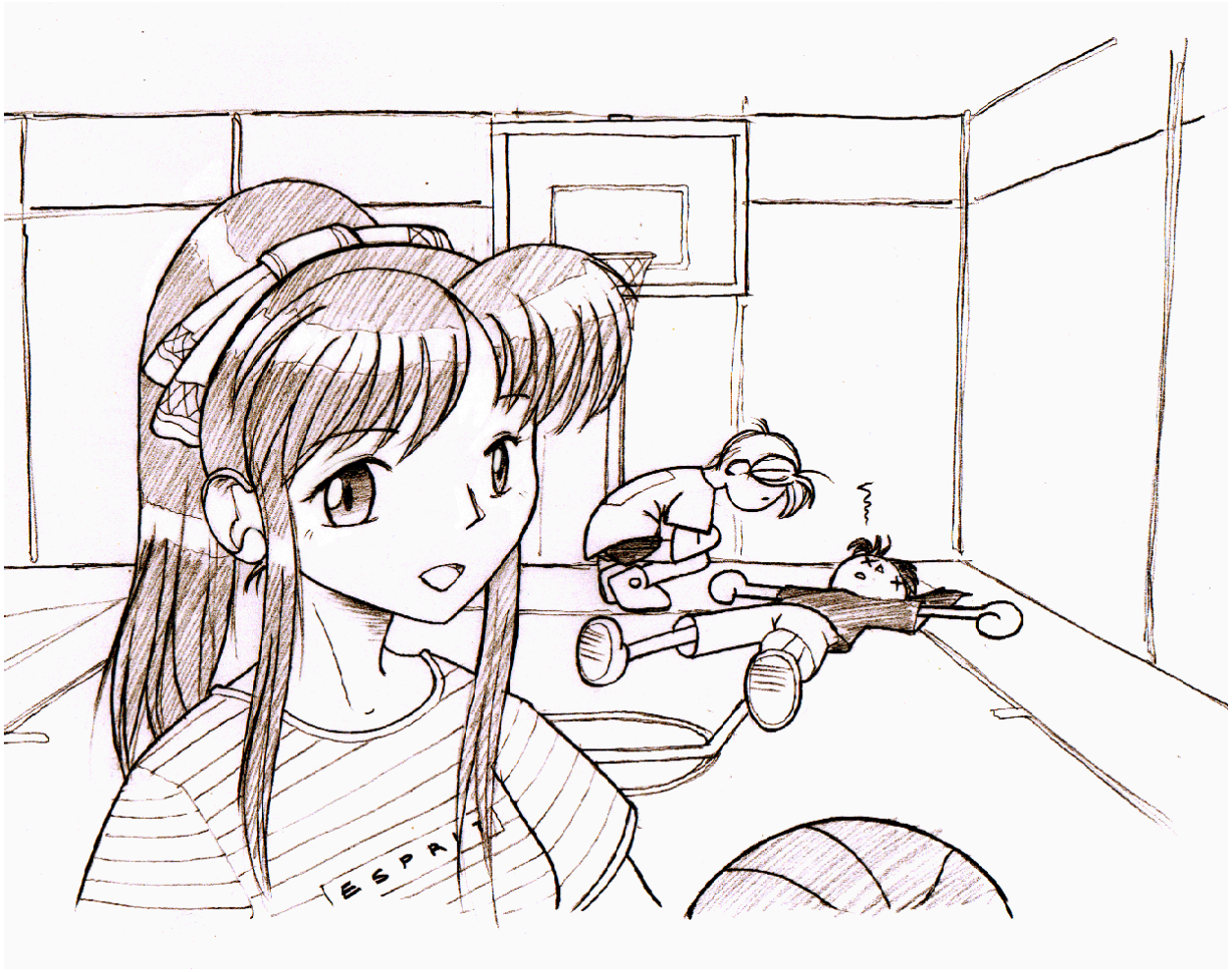


He looked up at the school building. He now knew what he had to do. He needed to tell Kasumi that it was ok. She needed to know that he would support her no matter what.

He wanted her to be happy.



Yes, that was, after all, the most important thing…

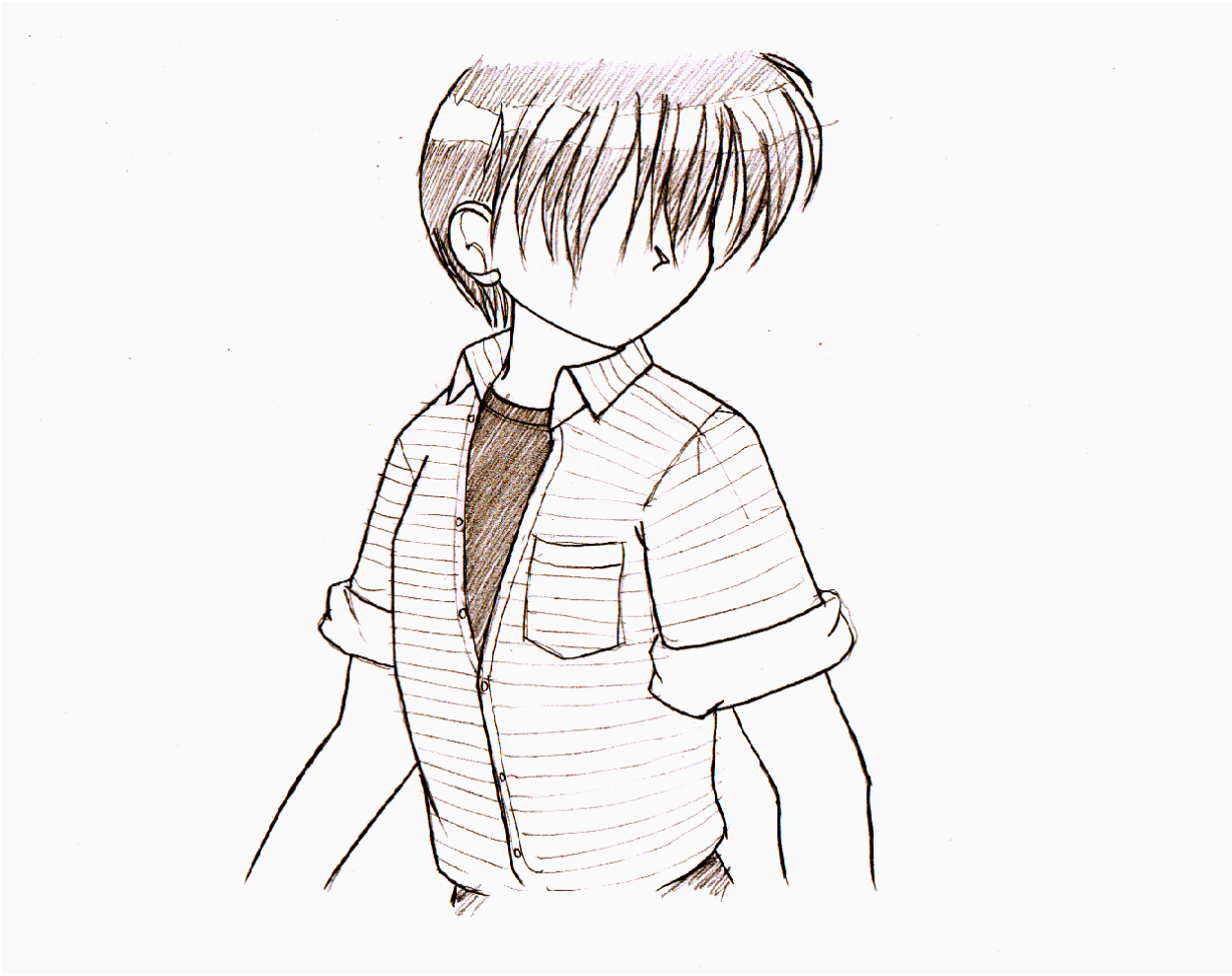


"Kasumi-chan? Yes, I think I saw her in the park," Akane-chan replied.

"Thank you!" Masato said, and walked briskly away. It was now Sunday, and Kasumi had very effectively avoided him all week.

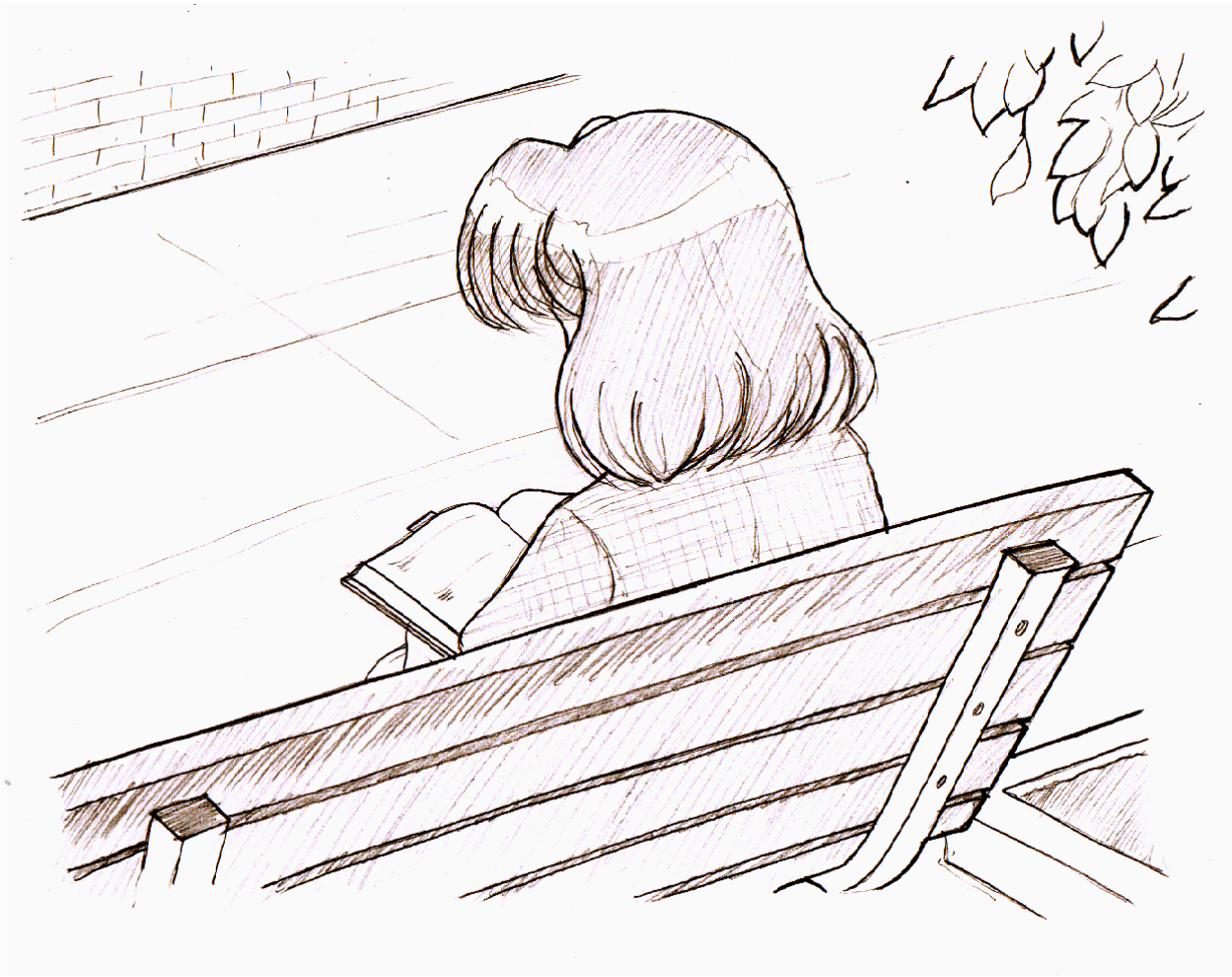
He had tried to call her, but she was never home. It was frightening how well she could avoid him during the day.

Since it was Sunday, he figured that there was nothing he could do. A chance run-in with Akane-san prompted him to ask if she had seen her. Amazingly, Akane had seen her not ten minutes ago, reading in the park. He had to see if he could find her.



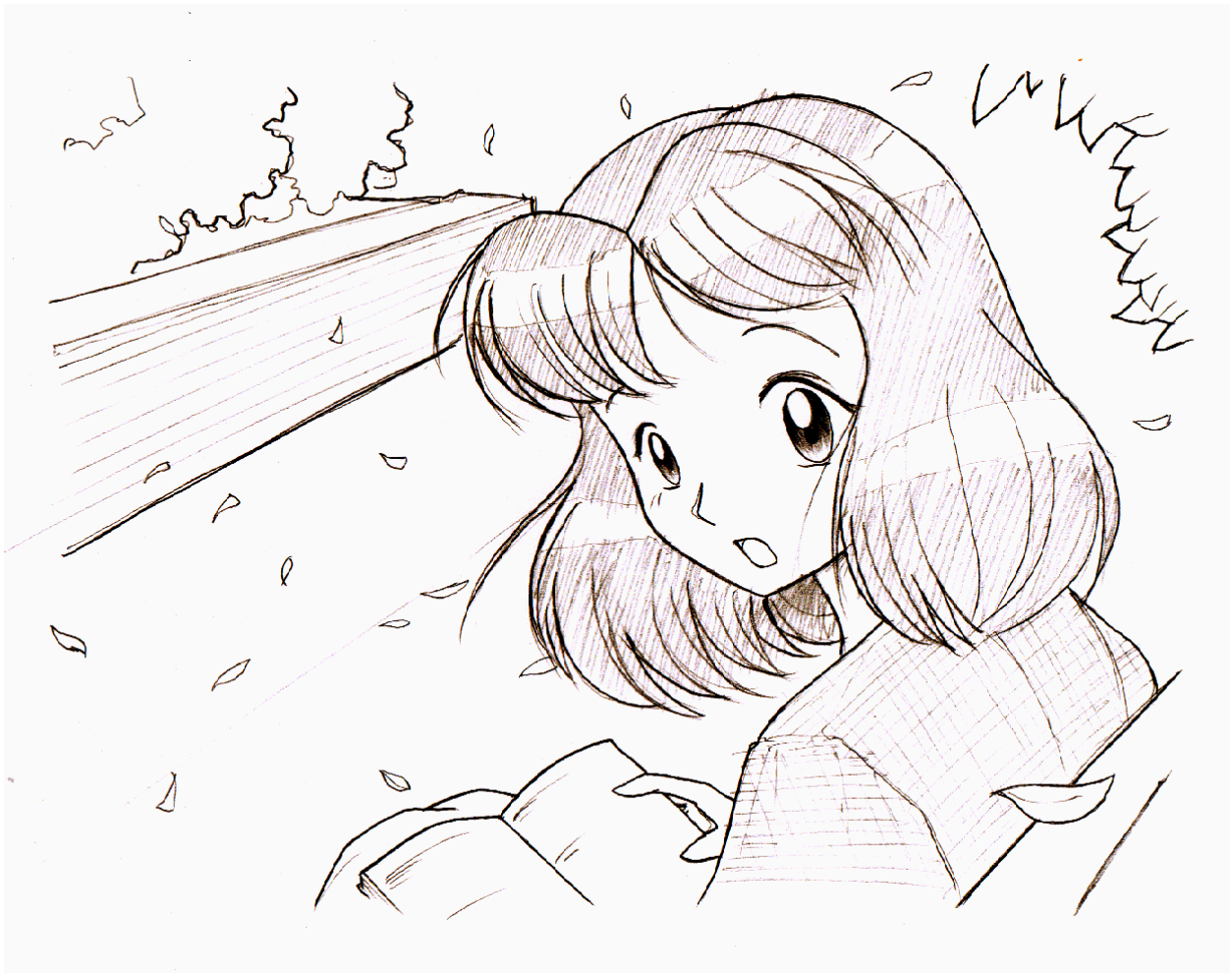
He walked briskly into the park. As he rounded the corner, he looked everywhere, but couldn't see her.

His shoulders slumped. It was hopeless. He was never going to be able to talk to her at this rate.



Suddenly, just as he was ready to give up, he saw Kasumi sitting on a bench on the other side of the park.

"AH! KASUMI!" he called out, dashing towards her.



Kasumi looked up, startled.

She opened her mouth and gaped at him, blushing.

"Ah, Masato! I..."

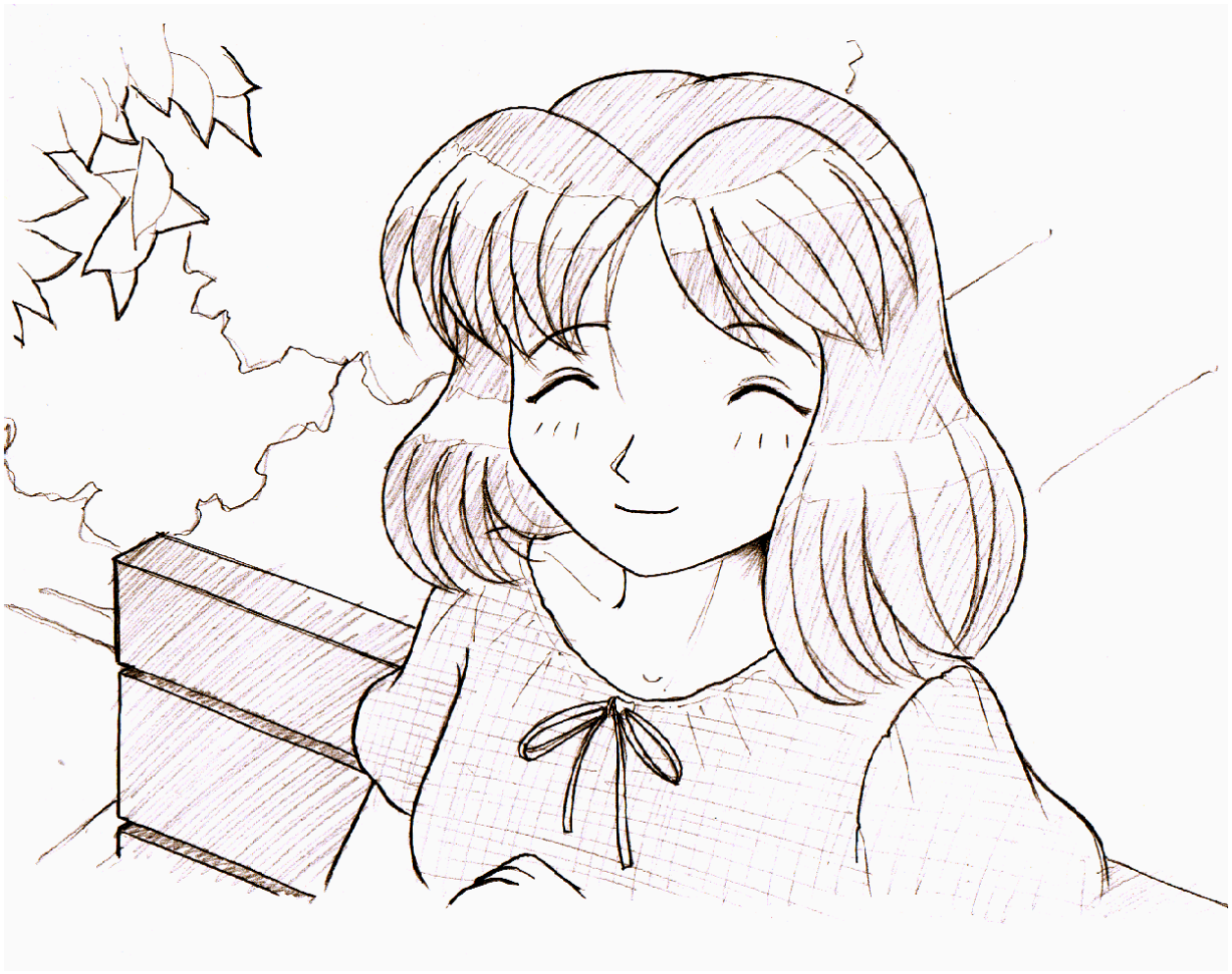
"Ah..." he started to say, then forgot it all.

He had been concentrating so hard on just finding her, that he realized that he didn't know what he was going to say when he DID find her. He stood there with his mouth open trying to find his train of thought...

She blinked at him, seemingly not sure what to say herself. He grasped at the only thought that came to his mind.

"Ah, I've been looking all over for you! I, er, need your help! I need to get a present for my sister for her birthday, and I can't figure out what to get her. Can you help me?"

It was literally all he could think of.

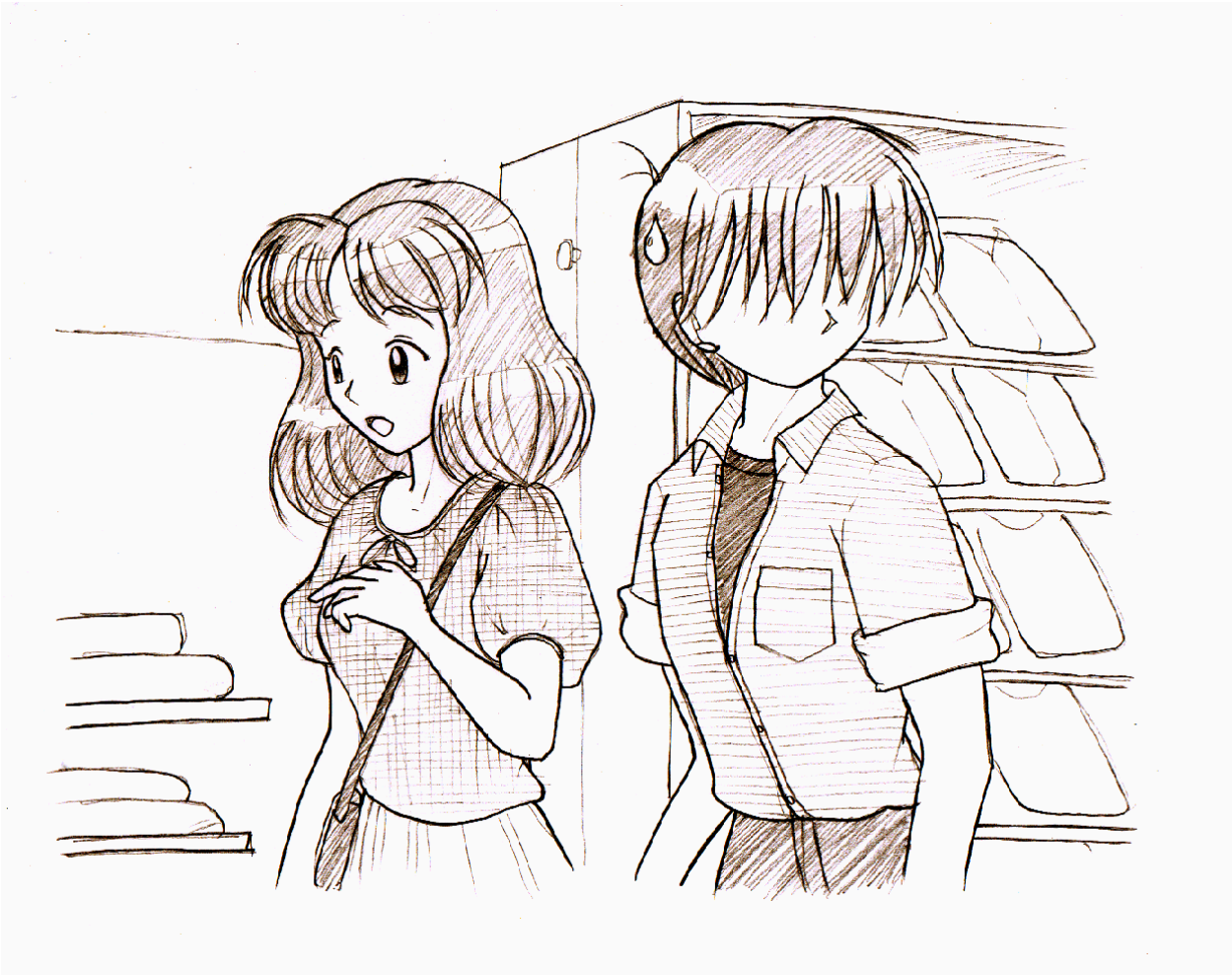


Kasumi blinked again, and then she smiled.

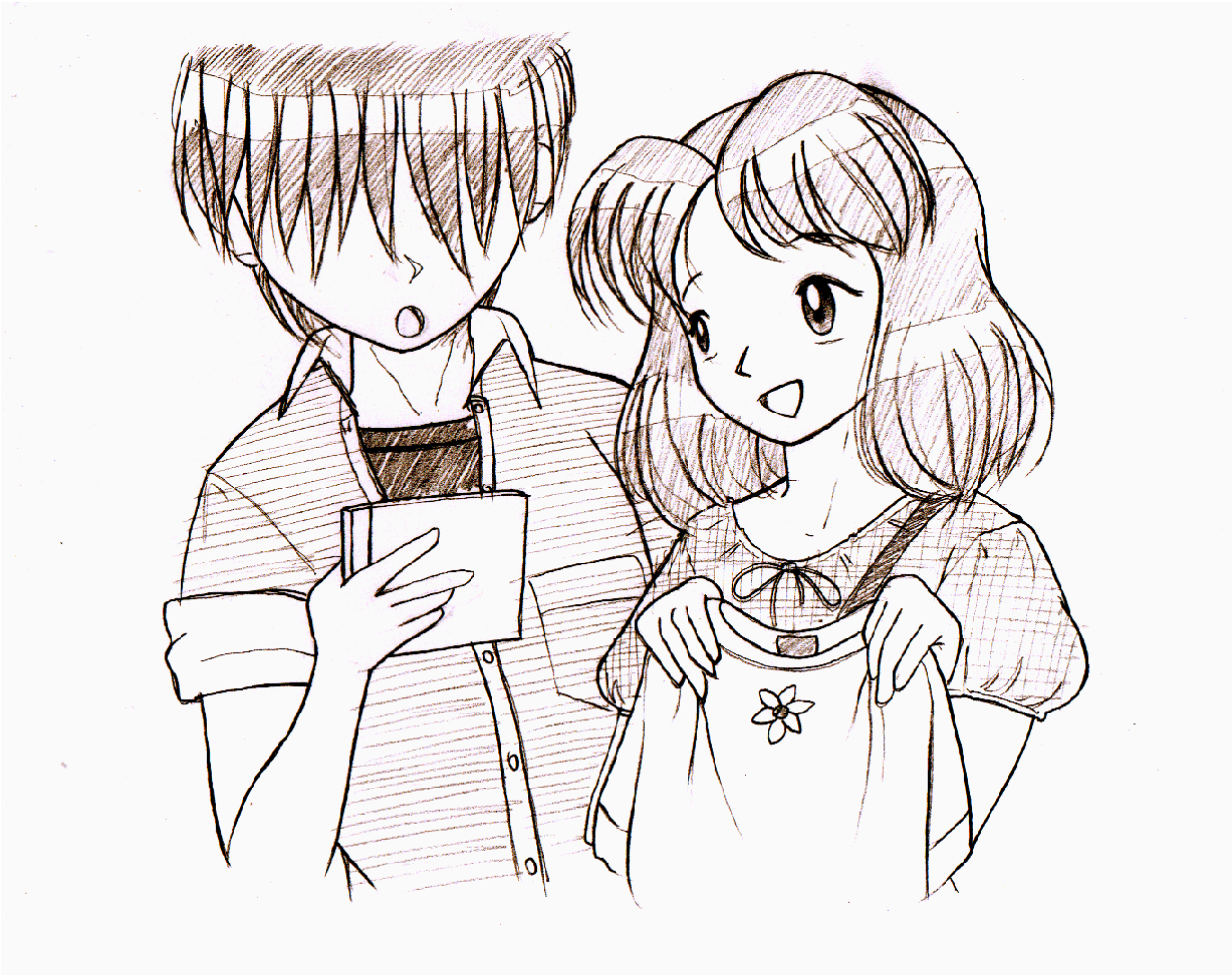
"Hmhm! I can help you pick out something," she said. "It's a little early yet, but you did forget last year."

He laughed, perhaps too brightly. "Yea! It is, heheh. I almost forgot again - if I do that, Kimiko will kill me."

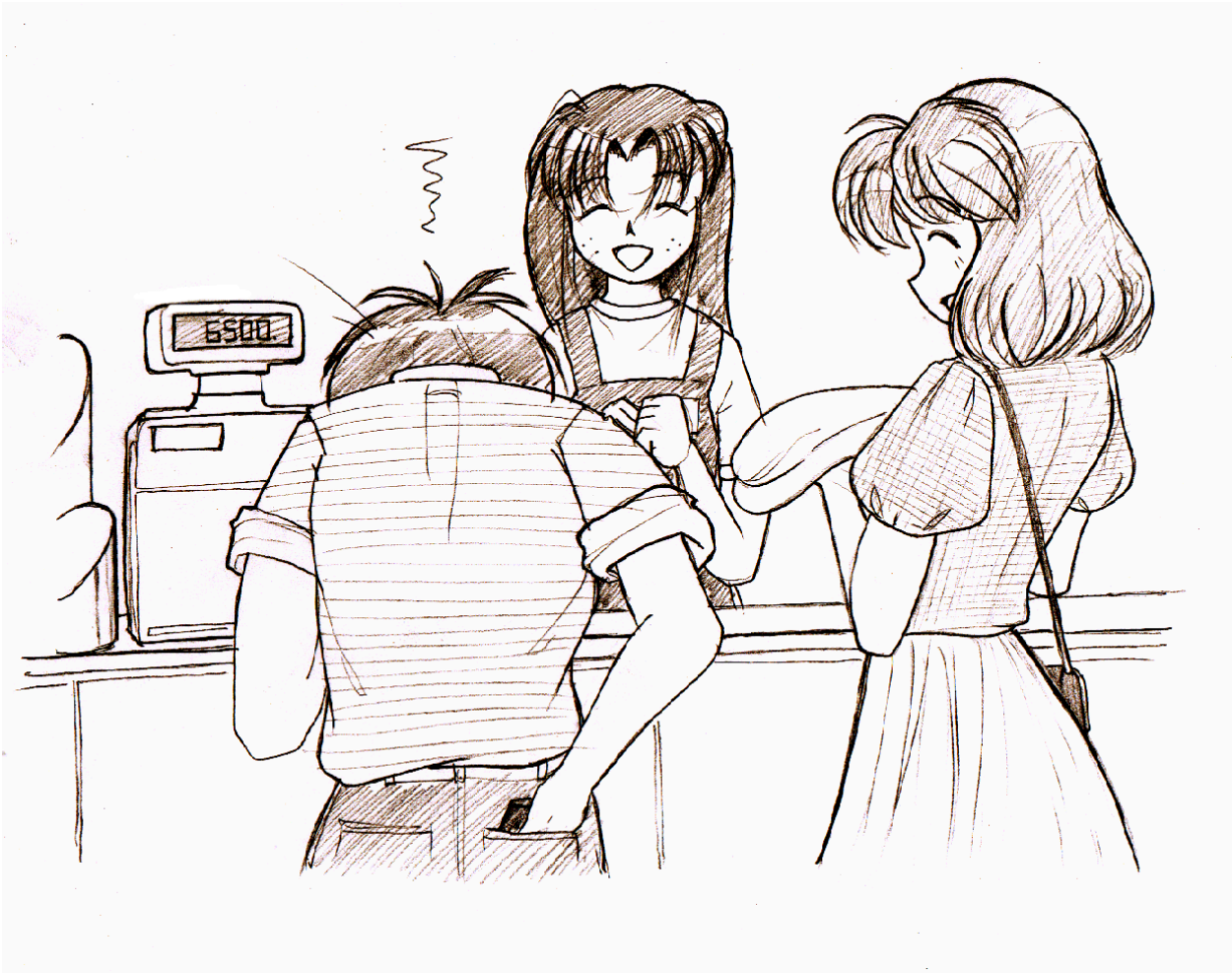
Kasumi smiled, a gentle, relaxed, quiet smile - the Kasumi he knew so well.



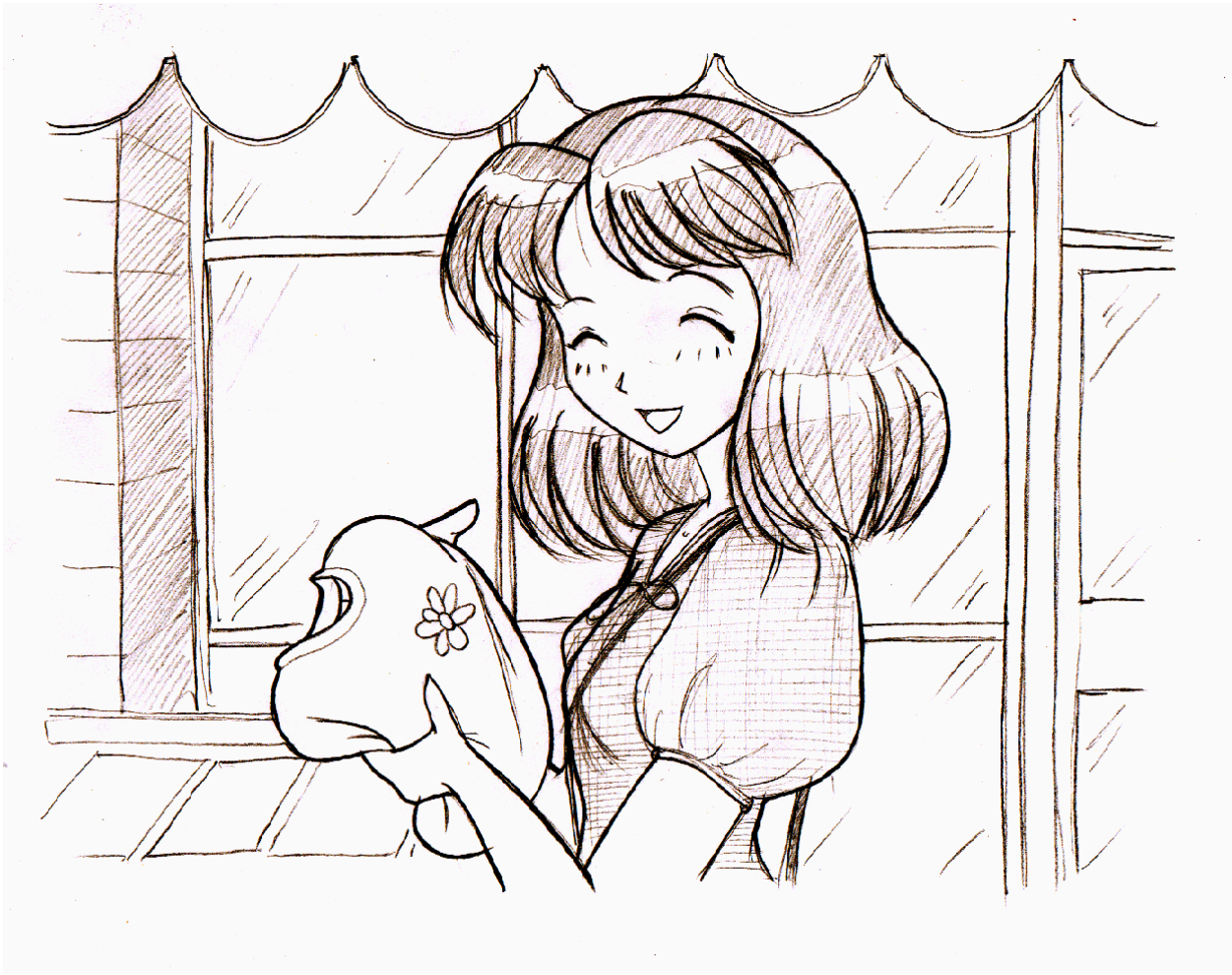
Not sure what to do next, Masato went with Kasumi to find a birthday present for his sister. They looked at all sorts of things that might be appropriate for Kimiko.



Kasumi knew Kimiko pretty well, and was a good judge at what she might like...



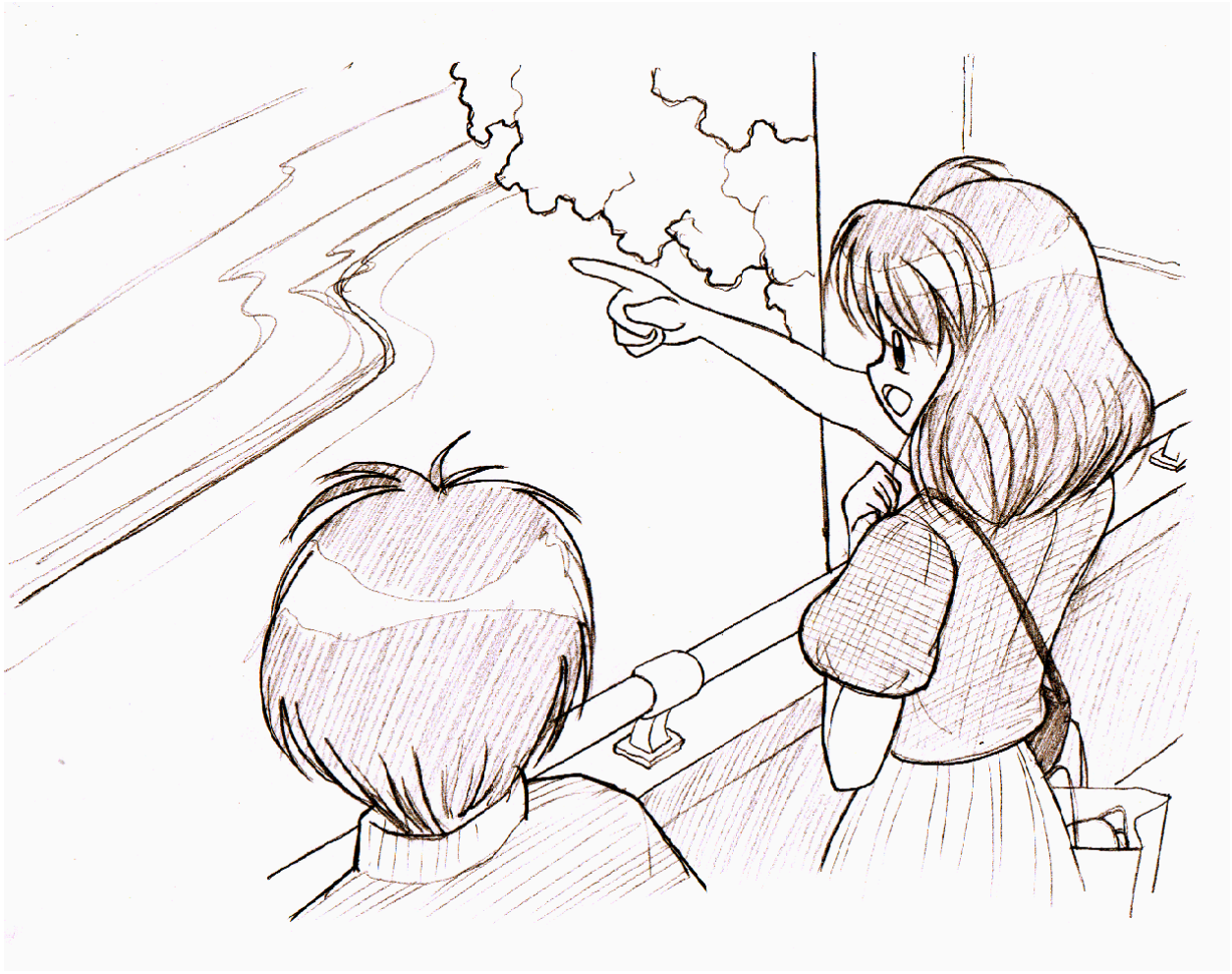
...but it was more expensive than he had hoped.



It was a beautiful summer day. They were near the edge of town, and could see glimpses of the bay between the buildings and through the trees.

As they walked, Kasumi pulled the sweatshirt they had purchased from the bag and looked at it. "I think this is perfect, Masato," she said. "You're a nice brother for thinking of your sister this way - especially being willing to spend this much on her."

He grimaced - the sweatshirt was a *little* more than what he was planning to spend. "I needed your help though. I usually do," he said.

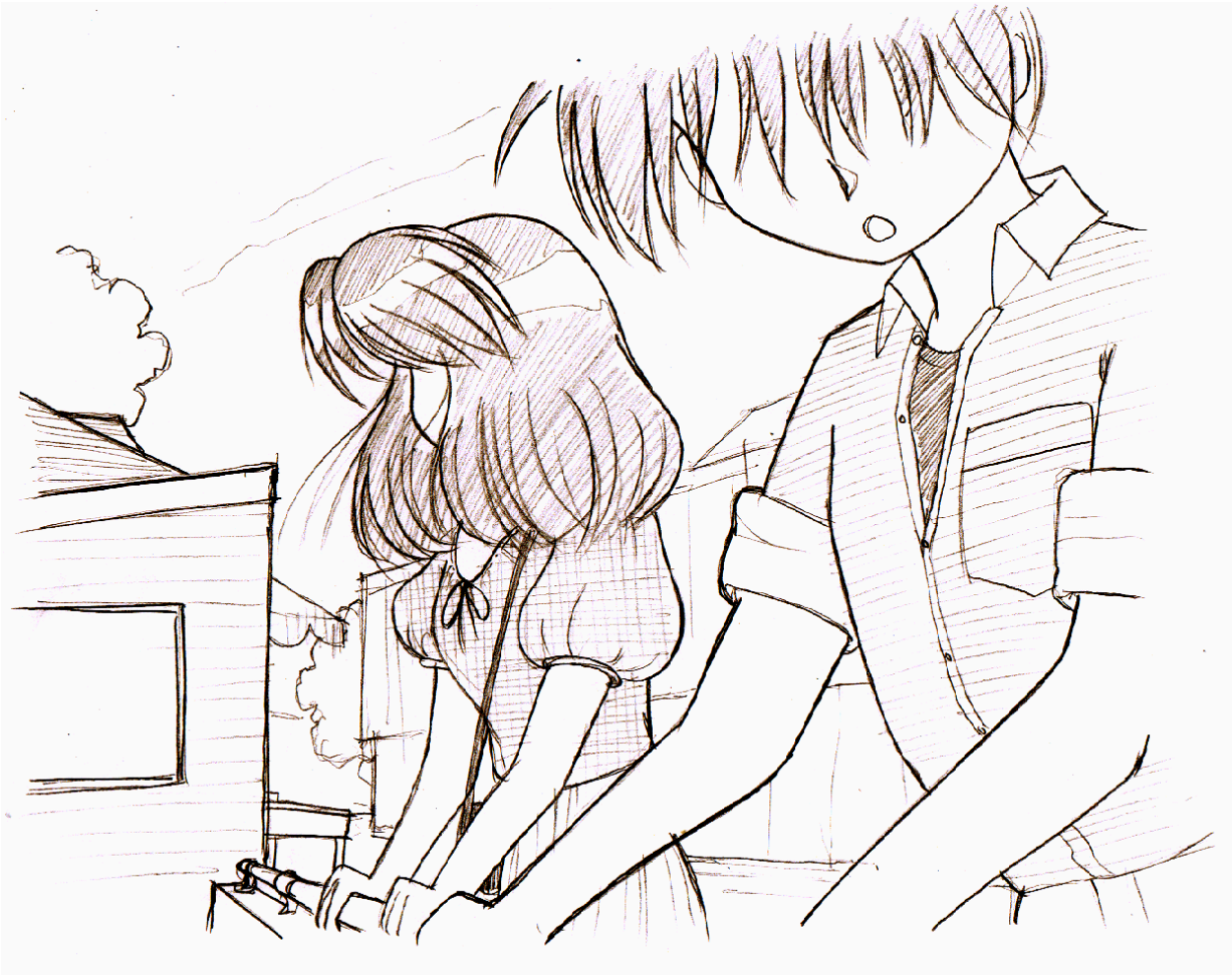


The mood changed slightly. Kasumi's cheery mood seemed to falter, just a little. They now stood near the last shop, next to a railing that looked over the bay.

"Kasumi..." he said

Her expression seemed quiet, but there was something churning beneath her eyes. It almost looked like she wanted to cry.

"Look at the bay. The wind is pretty brisk today," she said, turning and pointing out over the railing.

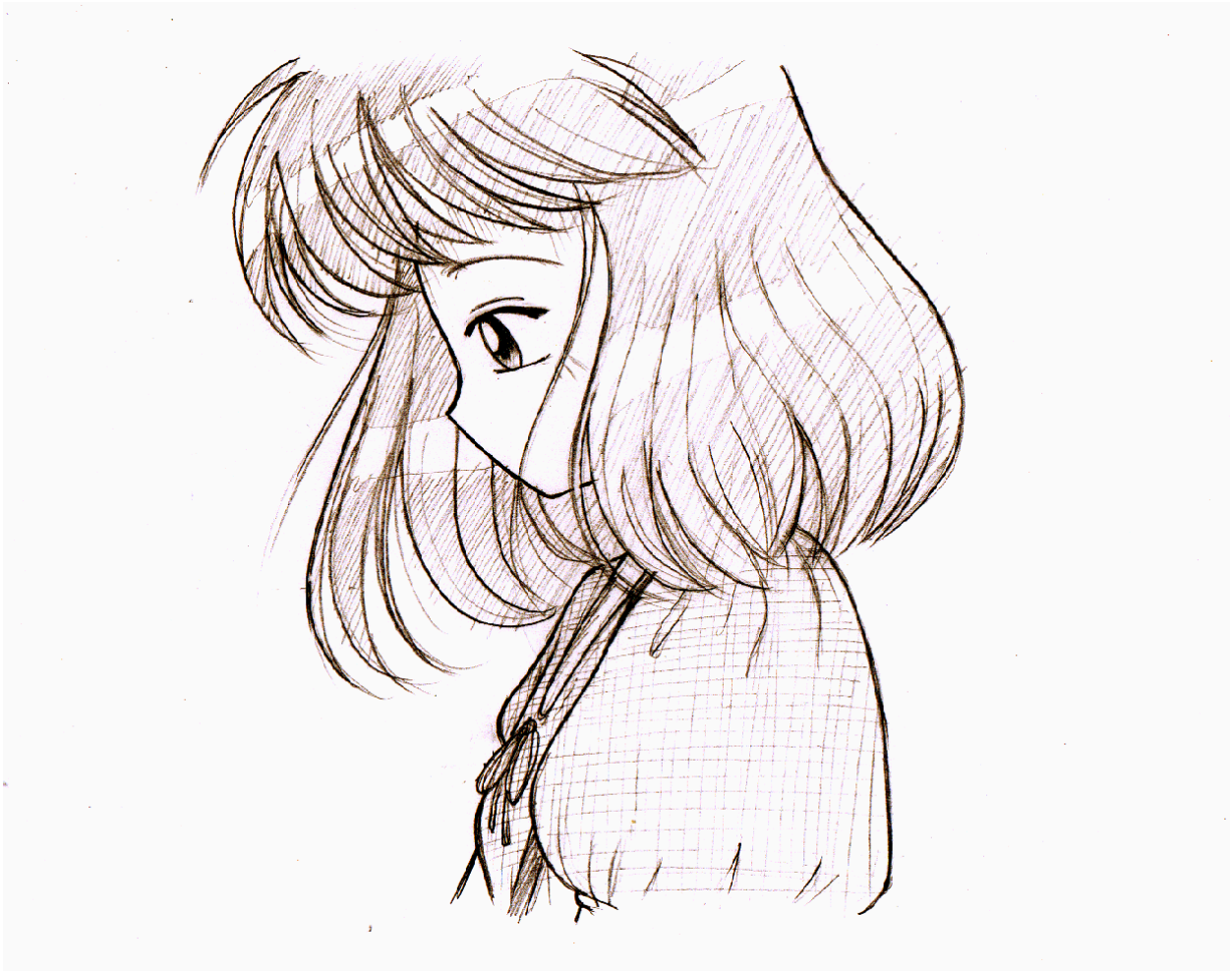


"Kasumi, I..."

"It's ok... you don't have to say anything," she said.

"No, Kasumi, listen..."

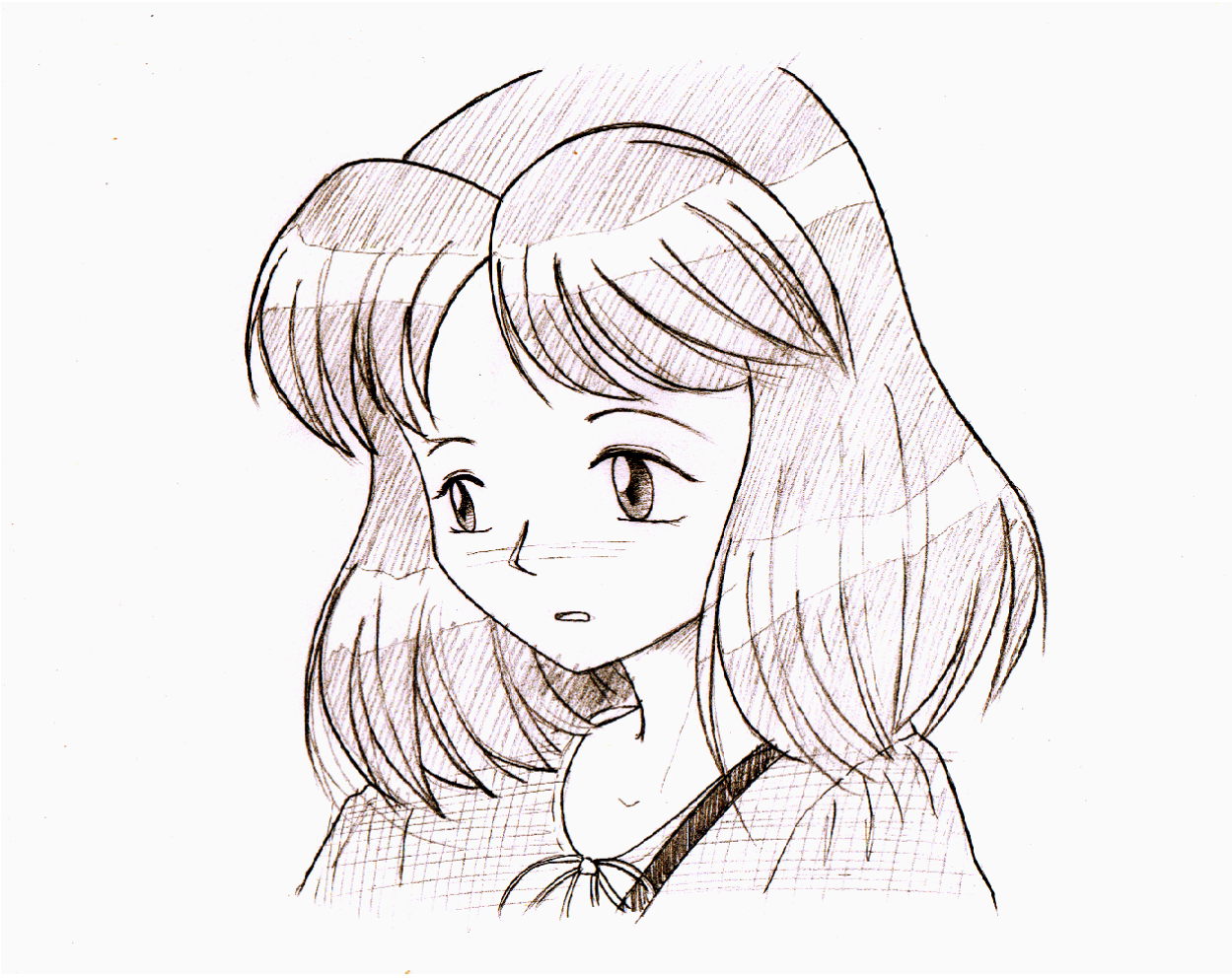
He gulped, gripping the handrail. "It's... ok," he said, grasping at how to say it, and wondering even what he was trying to say. "As long as you're happy, I'll... I'll just..."



She dropped her eyes. She looked so sad.

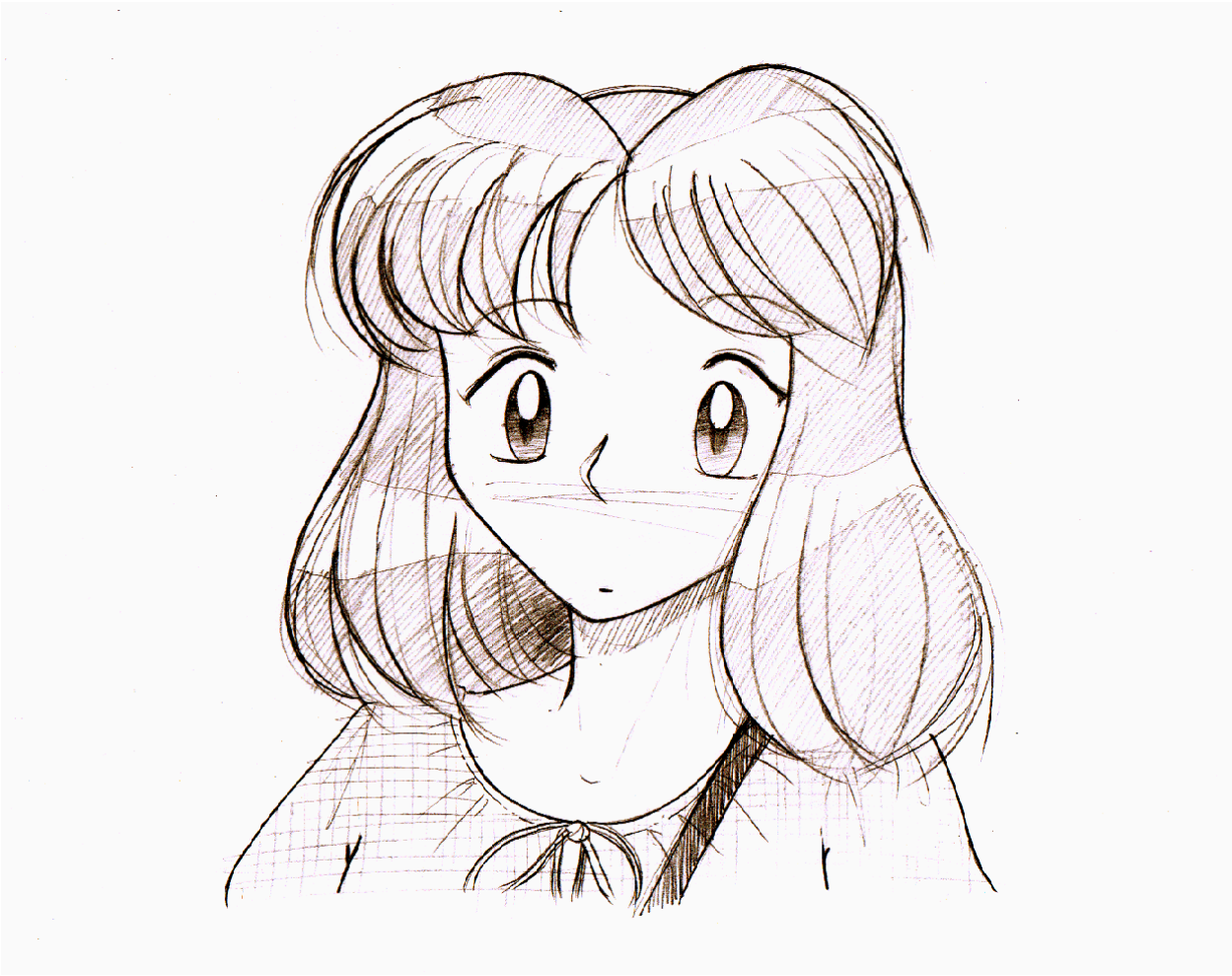
"I, I'm sorry. Kasumi, I'm so sorry. I just thought that you would always be around, you know? Now I don't really know what to do. I just want you to be happy. That's all I want. I just wish... I just wish I hadn't waited so long to say something, to tell you how I felt. I just didn't know how to say it."

He swallowed. "Now... I guess I've lost you... it's all my own fault, and I know it. I really don't know what to do. I just... I mean, I want you to be happy more than anything. It's ok..."



She tried to look at him, but she couldn't meet his eyes. "L... lost.... me?" she asked. "Masato, you haven't 'lost' me, I..."

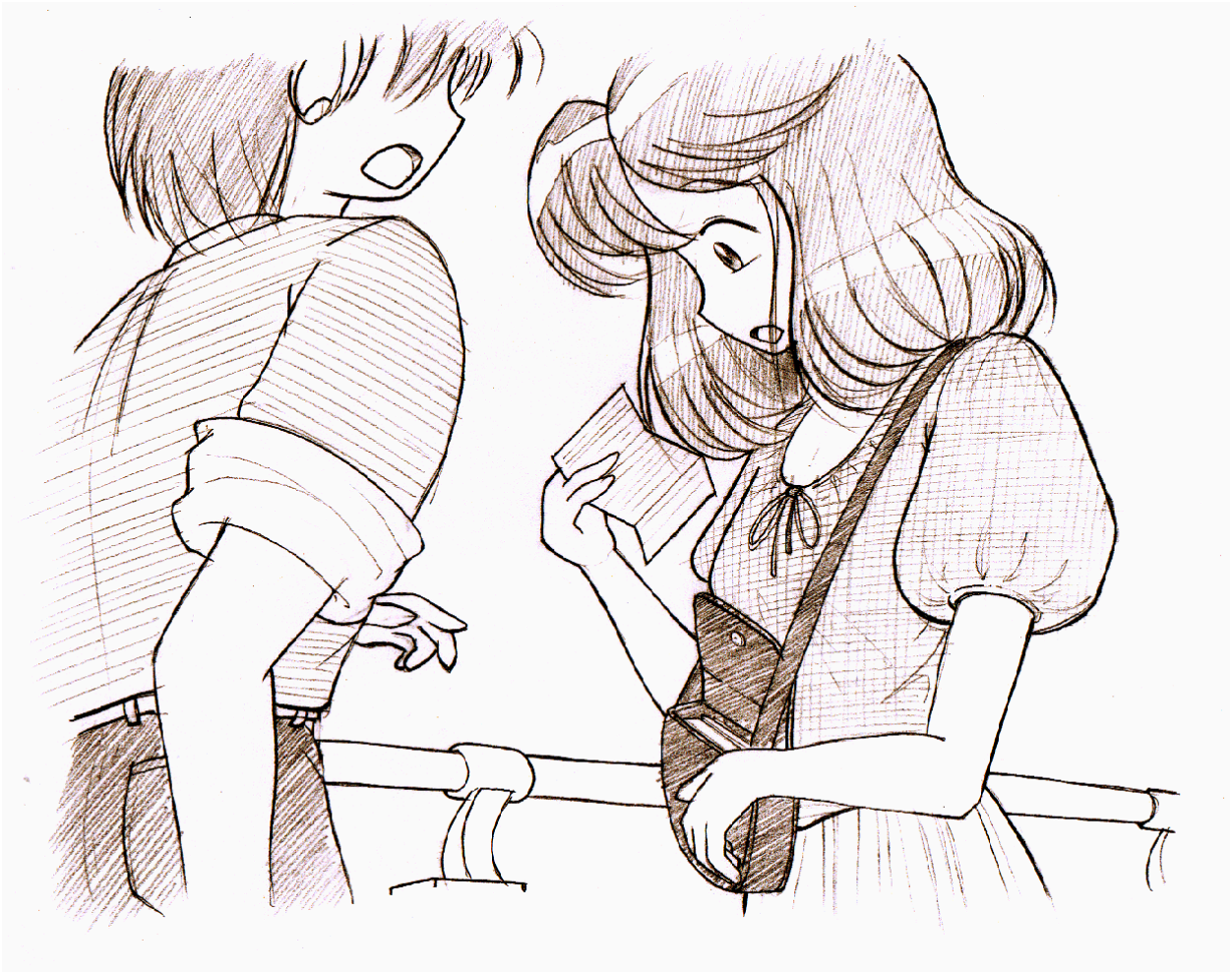
He looked at the ground, swallowed the last of his courage, and said what he knew he had to say. "The other guy. It... it's ok. It's ok. I mean, I have no place to say anything, but..."



She blinked at him. "Other guy?"

Masato didn't understand her reaction. "Er... the... the love letter... The one you got from that guy. I just wanted to say... say that I'm ok with it. I mean, not really. I mean, it's my fault I never said anything, so, so..."

She blinked again. "Didn't you... you mean, that letter wasn't from you?"



Now it was his turn to be confused. "From me?!?"

She looked at him for a moment, not sure what to say. "Didn't you write it? Wasn't it from you? But you said..." She seemed unsettled all of a sudden.

He shook his head. "No! But... you thought it was me? What... did it say?"

She hesitated... then pulled the letter from her purse and handed it to him.

He looked at it, immediately recognizing Keijmoto's stilted, wavering handwriting.

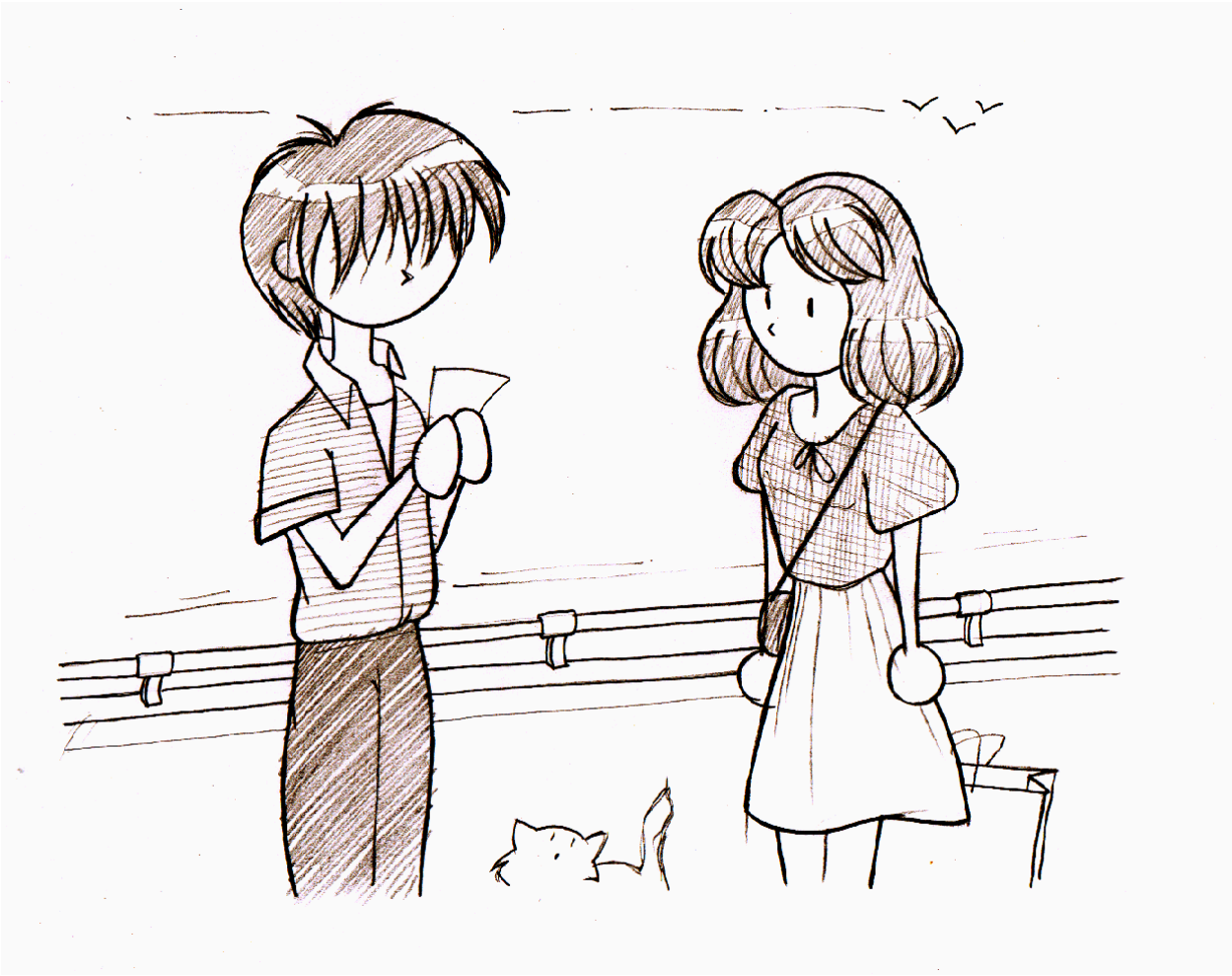
"EEEHHHH!?! This is Keijimoto's handwriting!!" he stormed. "I'll kill him!! I'll KILL HIM!!" Masato fumed... then he stopped.

"Waitaminute..." he said, stopping for a moment. "You and Keijimoto barely know each other. I thought he had this major crush on Kazama-san..."

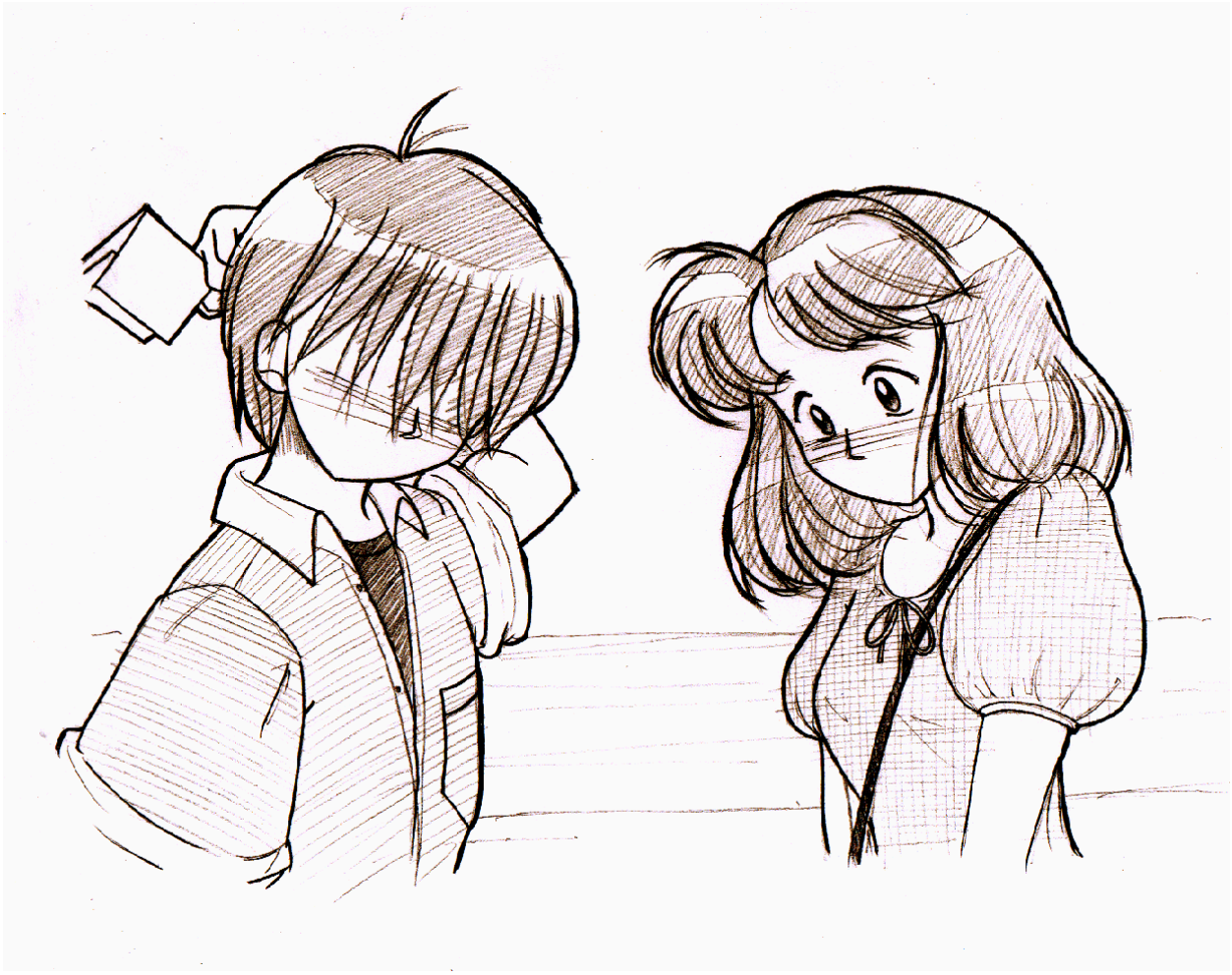
"Kazama-san? Her locker is right next to mine."

There was a long pause.

"He put it in the wrong locker!" they both said in astonishment.



They looked at each other awkwardly. They looked down at the letter. Both of them found themselves blushing.



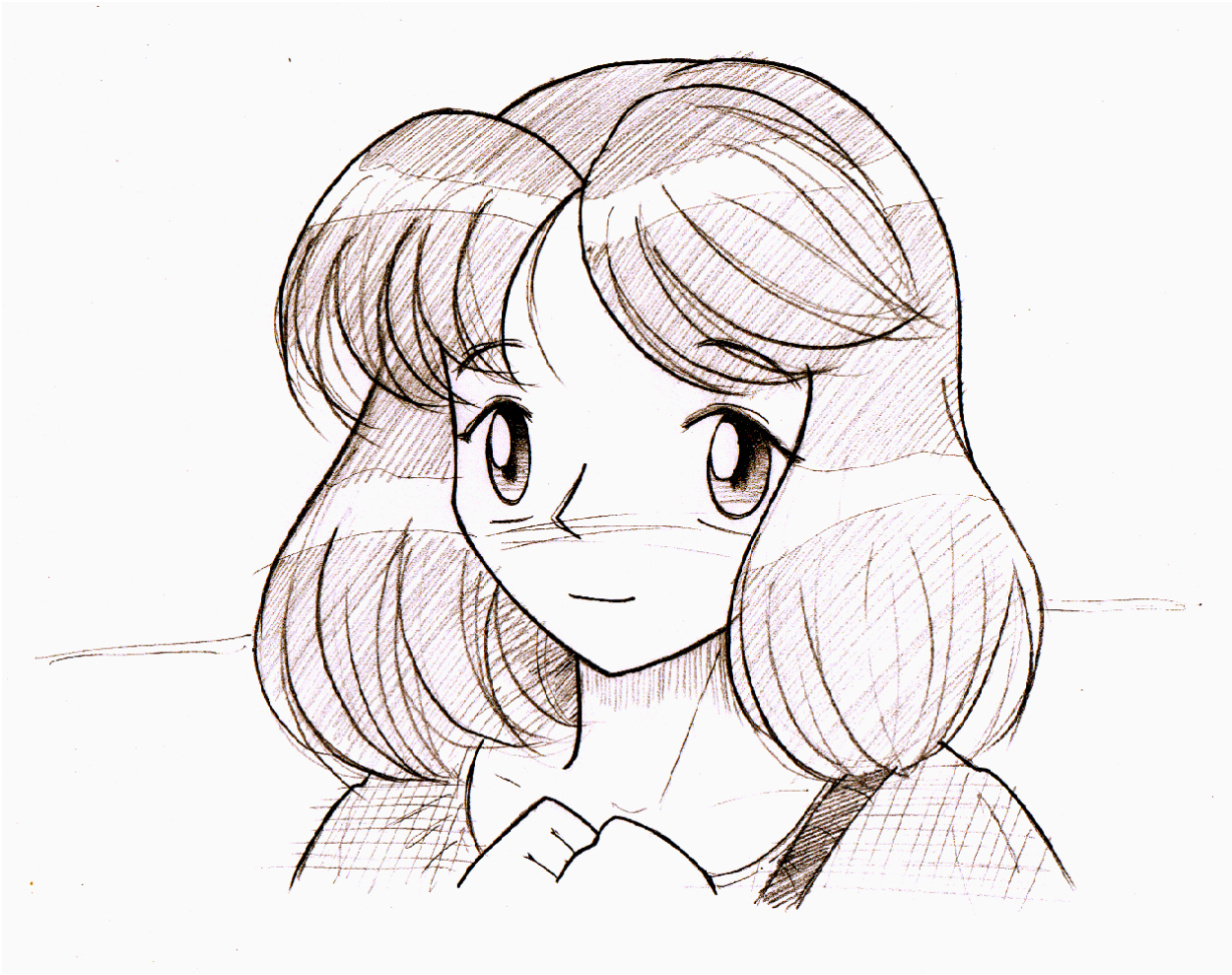
Masato looked at the letter. "Uhm..." he said. "I'm sorry about... the confusion."

Kasumi looked akwardly to one side. "Hmhmm... it's ok. It's my fault too."

"You were avoiding me, I couldn't even find you."

"I'm sorry. I just didn't know what to do," she said.

He nodded. Then he laughed. "Wow, that was... embarrasing, wasn't it?"



She looked at him. His grin faded a bit. "I'm sorry," he said. "That does sound an awful lot like me, doesn't it? I do sorta laugh my feelings off a lot. I'm sorry."

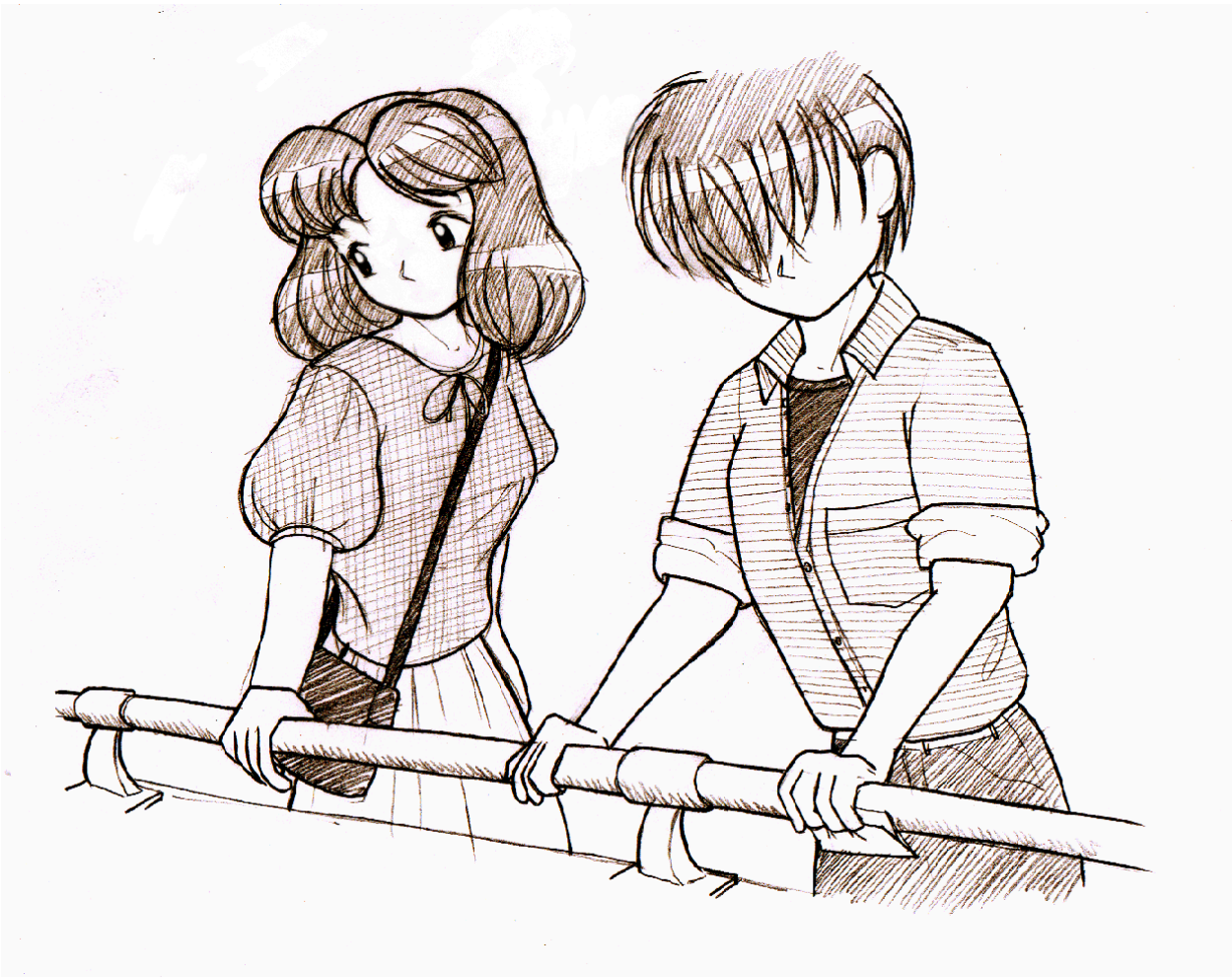
She blushed. "Sometimes I don't know what to say either."

"You're not mad at me?"

She shook her head, and smiled.

"I'm glad there isn't another guy," he said awkwardly.

She smiled again. "No... no one else."



"Right. Good. Ok then..." he said, floundering and wondering how to respond.

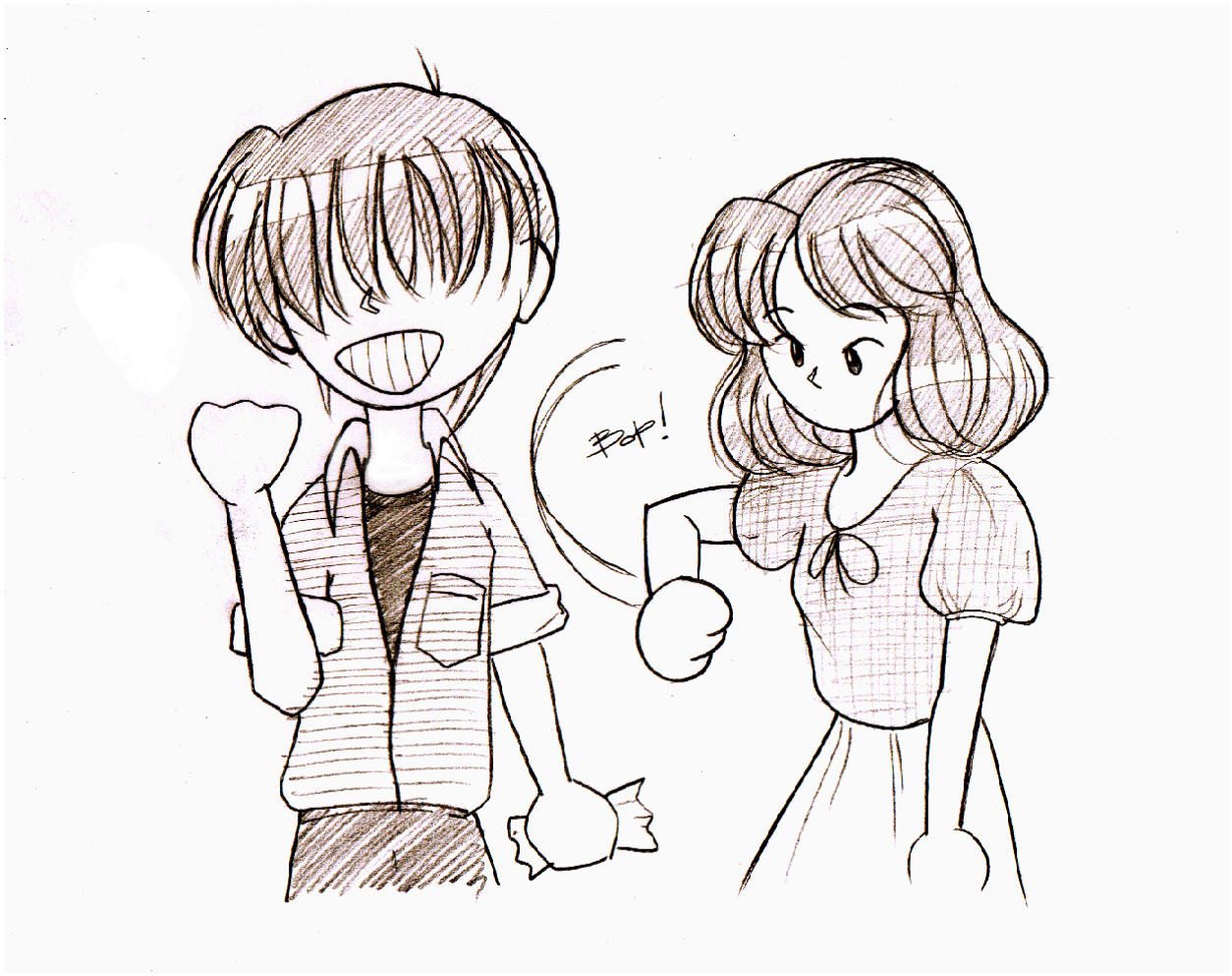
She giggled. Masato laughed uneasily, and the tension seemed to drain away from both of them.

"How did you know about the letter?" she asked.

"Hm? Oh, this," he said, pulling the envelope out of his shirt pocket. "You must have dropped it when you ran off that evening. You left your shoes out too. I put them away for you."

"I did? Oh, thank you. I'm sorry. This wouldn't have happened if..."

"No! I'm glad it did..." he smiled, "I mean..."



Masato grinned. He looked at the letter and envelope. He folded the letter, carefully put it in the envelope and closed it. He then tapped the envelope against his cheek.

She looked at him. "What are you thinking?"

"I think I need to have a little talk with Keijimoto..."

"No! Don't get mad at him! It was an honest mistake!" Kasumi said, startled.

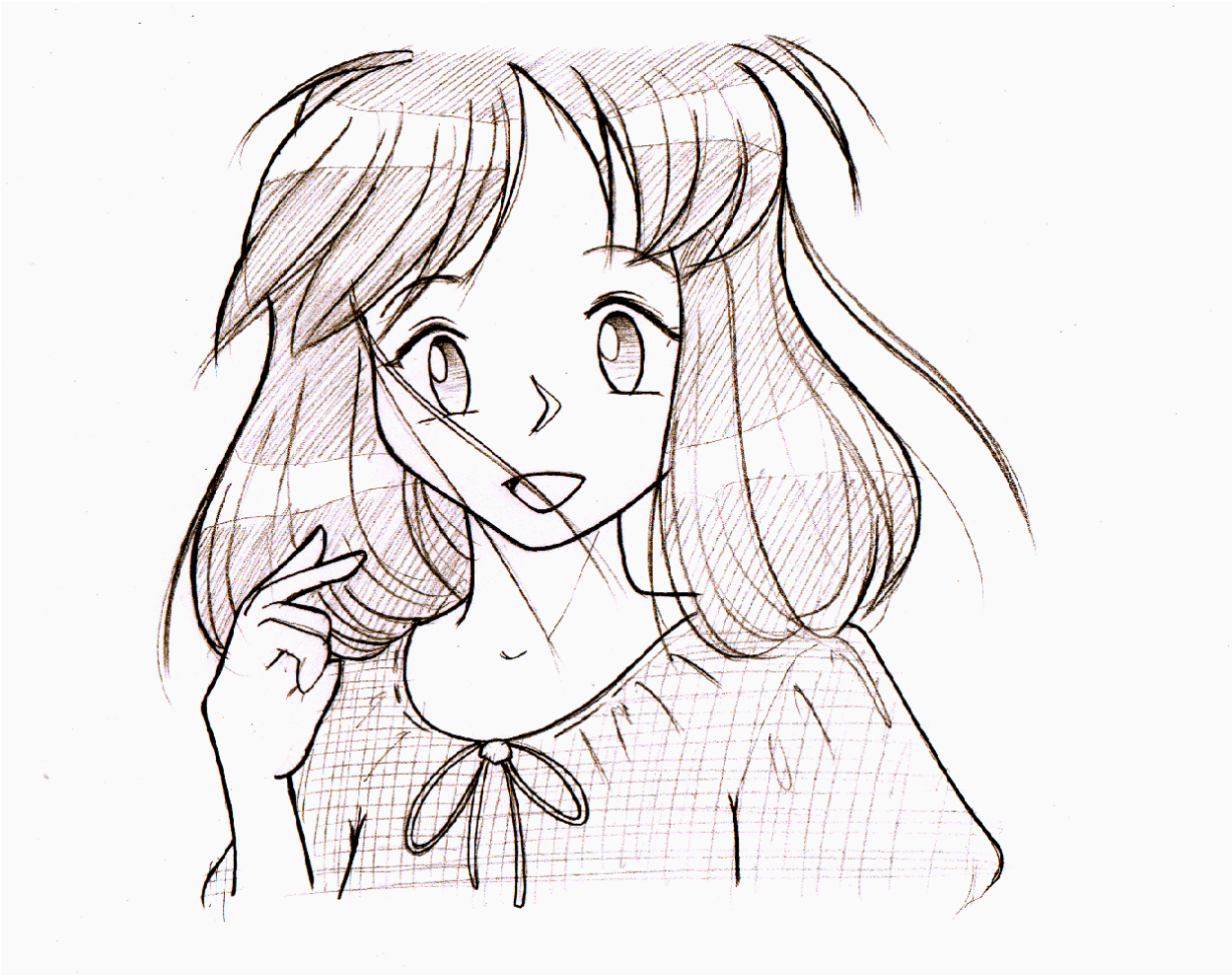
Masato shook his head. "No, I'm going to tell him that sending a letter like this is NOT the thing to do. He needs to be forward, honest, and tell her directly."

"Isn't he kind of shy? I don't know him well, but..."

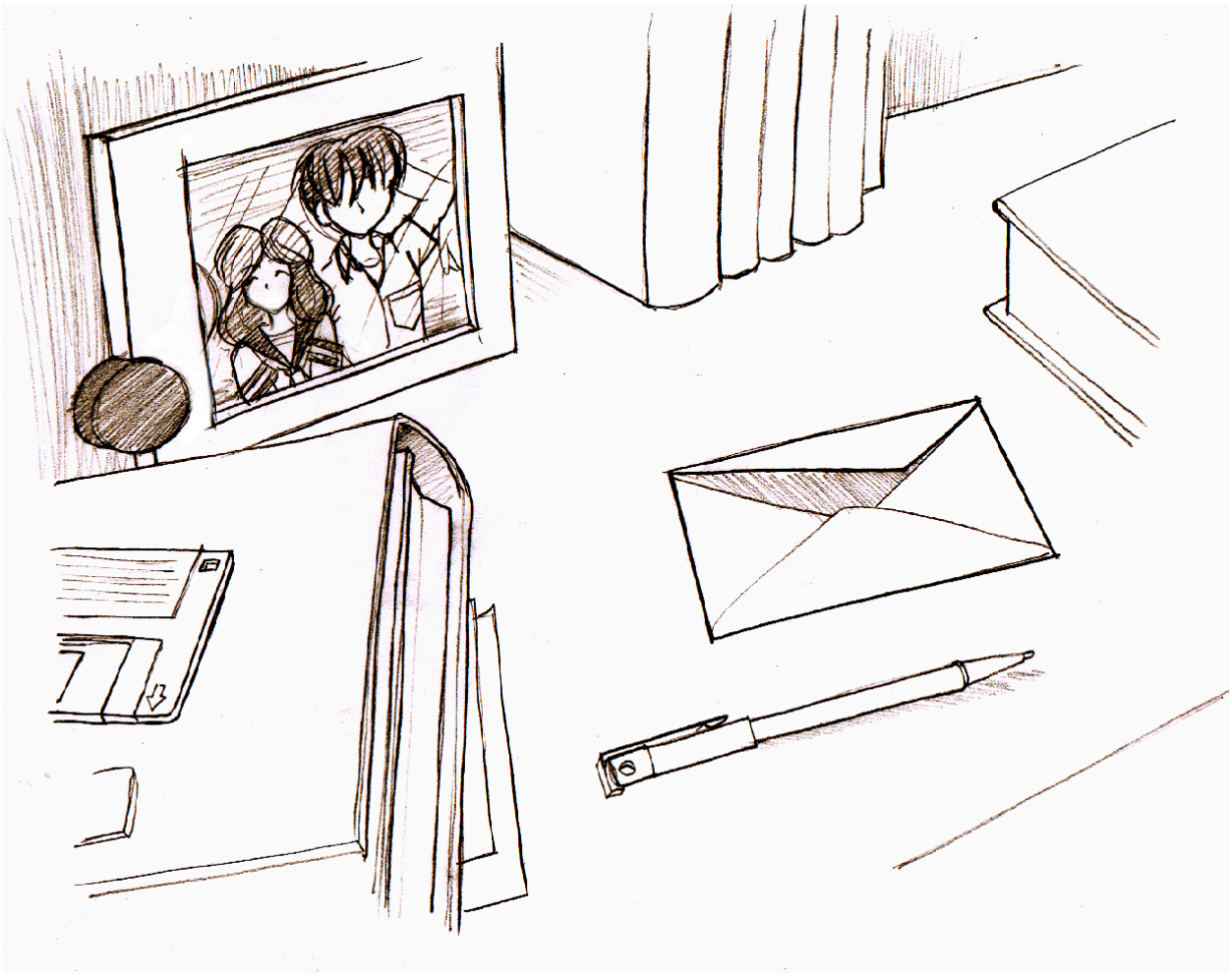
Masato grinned. "Oh, he'll do it. Or I'll give Kazama-san this note myself, as well as explain the whole situation to her. I've heard enough about how he feels about HER to entertain her for hours. "

Kasumi bopped him on the shoulder with her fist. "That's mean..."

"Isn't it?" He grinned.



Kasumi laughed. There was a warmth in that laugh he hadn't heard in a long time. At first, he felt that he might have said too much, that he perhaps he might have confessed feelings he wasn't ready to confess yet. Another part of him felt that he needed to say more, to make sure that she understood how he felt…



... But her smile, and the warm feeling deep inside his chest told him that perhaps he had said just enough. Just enough for now.

envelope

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o m a k e

MoeMoe and Hime-chan hogging my drafting table. We always fight for space on the table, and I usually lose.